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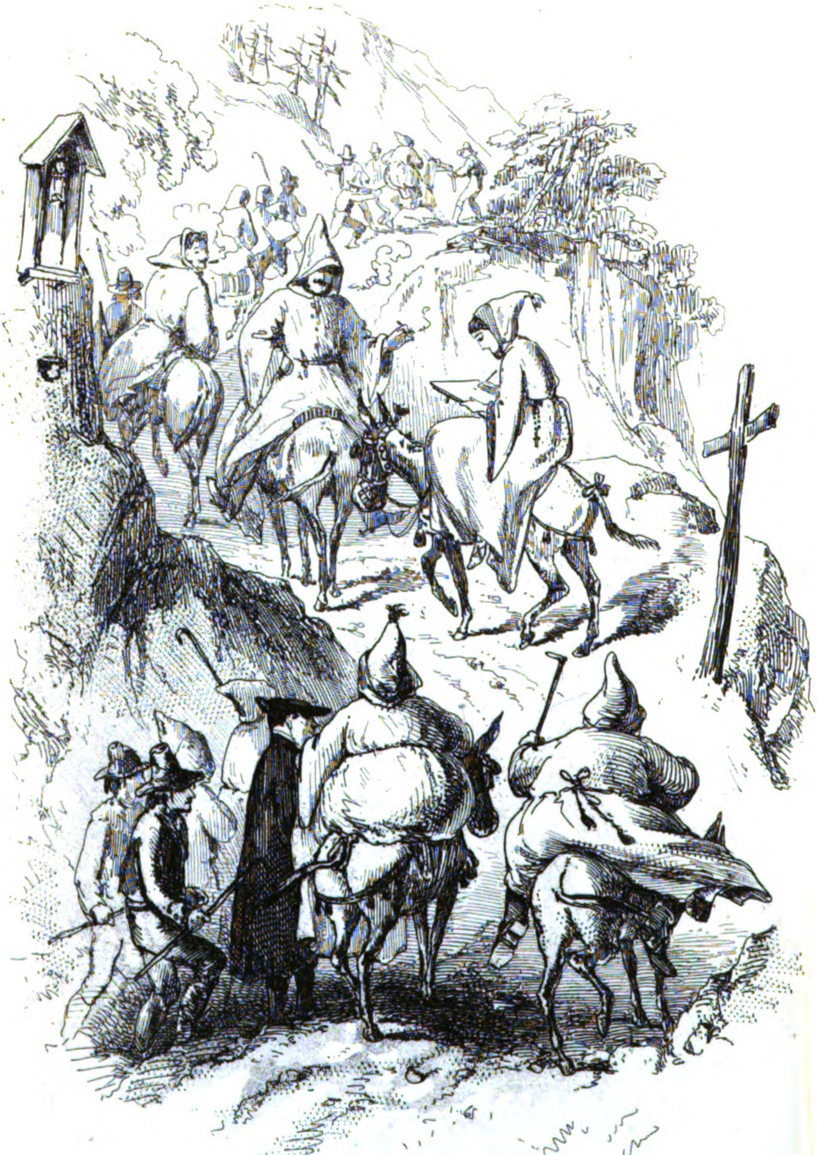

The Pilgrimage to Oropa

THE NOVELS OF CHARLES LEVER.

With an Introduction by Andrew Lang.

THE

DODD FAMILY ABROAD.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THAT BOY OF NORCOTT'S.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY PHIZ AND
W. CUBITT COOKE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

BOSTON: LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY.
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1895.

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THAT BOY OF NORCOTT'S.

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THE

DODD FAMILY ABROAD.

LETTER I.

KENNY JAMES DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., OF THE GRANGE, BRUFF.

CONSTANCE.

MY DEAR TOM, — I got the papers all safe. I am sure the account is perfectly correct. I only wish the balance was bigger. I waited here to receive these things, and now I discover that I can't sign the warrant of attorney except before a consul, and there is none in this place, so that I must keep it over till I can find one of those pleasant functionaries, — a class that between ourselves I detest heartily. They are a presumptuous, under-bred, consequential race, — a cross between a small skipper and smaller Secretary of Legation, with a mixture of official pedantry and maritime off-handedness that is perfectly disgusting. Why our reforming economists don't root them all out I cannot conceive. Nobody wants, nobody benefits by them; and save that you are now and then called on for a "consular fee," you might never hear of their existence.

I don't rightly understand what you say about the loan from that Land Improvement Society. Do you mean that the money lent must be laid out on the land as a necessary condition? Is it possible that this is what I am to infer? If so, I never heard anything half so preposterous! Sure, if I raise five hundred pounds from a Jew, he has no right to stipulate that I must spend the cash on copper coal-scuttles or potted meats! I want it for my own convenience; enough for him that I comply with his demands for interest and repayment. Anything else would be downright tyranny and oppression, Tom, — as a mere momentary consideration of the matter will show you. At all events, let us get the money, for I'd like to contest the point with these fellows; and if ever there was a man heart and soul determined to break down any antiquated barrier of cruelty or domination, it is your friend Kenny Dodd! As to that printed paper, with its twenty-seven queries, it is positive balderdash from beginning to end. What right have they to conclude that I approve of subsoil draining? When did I tell them that I believed in Smith of Deanstown? Where is it on record that I gave in my adhesion to model cottages, Berkshire pigs, green crops, and guano manure? In what document do these appear? Maybe I have my own notions on these matters, — maybe I keep them for my own guidance too!

You say that the gentry is all changing throughout the whole land, and I believe you well, Tom Purcell. Changed indeed must they be if they subscribe to such preposterous humbug as this! At all events, I repeat we want the money, so fill up the blanks as you think best, and remit me the amount at your earliest, for I have barely enough to get to the end of the present month. I don't dislike this place at all. It is quiet, peaceful, — humdrum, if you will; but we've had more than our share of racket and row lately, and the reclusion is very grateful. One day is exactly like another with us. Lord George — for he is back again — and James go a-fishing as soon as breakfast is over, and only return for supper. Mary Anne reads, writes, sews, and sings. Mrs. D. fills up the time discharging Betty, settling with her, searching her trunks for missing articles, and being reconciled to her again, which, with occasional crying fits and her usual devotions, don't leave her a single moment unoccupied! As for me, I'm trying to learn German, whenever I'm not asleep. I've got a master, — he is a Swiss, and maybe his accent is not of the purest; but he is an amusing old vagabond, — an umbrella-maker, but in his youth a travelling-servant. His time is not very valuable to him, so that he sits with me sometimes for half a day; but still I make little progress. My notion is, Tom, that there's no use in either making love or trying a new language after you're five or six and twenty. It's all up-hill work after that, believe me. Neither your declensions nor declarations come natural to you, and it's a bungling performance at the best. The first condition of either is to have your head perfectly free, — as little in it as need be. So long as your thoughts are jostled by debts, duns, mortgages, and marriageable daughters, you'll have no room for vows or irregular verbs! It's lucky, however, that one can dispense both with the love and the learning, and indeed of the two, — with the last best, for of all the useless, unprofitable kinds of labor ever pursued out of a jail, acquiring a foreign language is the most. The few words required for daily necessaries, such as schnaps and cigars, are easily learnt; all beyond that is downright rubbish.

'For what can a man express his thoughts in so well as his mother tongue? with whom does he want to talk but his countrymen? Of course you come out with the old cant about "intelligent natives," "information derived at the fountain head," "knowledge obtained by social intimacy with people of the country." To which I briefly reply, "It's all gammon and stuff from beginning to end;" and what between *your* blunders in grammar and your informant's ignorance of fact, all such information is n't worth a "trauneen." Now, once for all, Tom, let me observe to you that ask what you will of a foreigner, be it an inquiry into the financial condition of his country, its military resources, prison discipline, law, or religion, he'll never acknowledge his inability to answer, but give you a full and ready reply, with facts, figures, dates, and data, all in most admirable order. At first you are overjoyed with such ready resources of knowledge. You flatter yourself that even with the most moderate opportunities you cannot fail to learn much; by degrees, however, you discover errors in your statistics, and at last, you come to find out that your accomplished friend, too polite to deny you a reasonable gratification, had gone to the pains of inventing a code, a church, and a coinage for your sole use and benefit, but without the slightest intention of misleading, for it never once entered his head that you could possibly believe him! I know it will sound badly. I am well aware of the shock it will give to many a nervous system; but for all that I will not blink the declaration — which I desire to record as formally and as flatly as I am capable of expressing it — which is, that of one hundred statements an Englishman accepts and relies upon abroad, as matter of fact, ninety-nine are untrue; full fifty being lies by premeditation, thirty by ignorance, ten by accident or inattention, and the remainder, if there be a balance, for I 'm bad at figures, from any other cause you like.

It is no more disgrace for a foreigner not to tell the truth than to own that he does not sing, nor dance the mazurka; not so much, indeed, because these are marks of a polite education. And yet it is to hold conversation with these people we pore over dictionaries, and Ollendorfs, and Hamiltonian gospels. As for the enlargement and expansion of the intelligence that comes of acquiring languages, there never was a greater fallacy. Look abroad upon your acquaintances: who are the glib linguists, who are the faultless in French genders, and the immaculate in German declensions? the flippant boarding-school miss, or the brainless, unpaid attaché, that cannot compose a note in his own language. Who are the bungling conversers that make drawing-rooms blush and dinner-tables titter? Your first-rate debater in the Commons, your leader at the bar, your double first, or your great electro-magnetic fellow that knows the secret laws of water-spouts and whirlpools, and can make thunder and lightning just to amuse himself. Take my word for it, your linguist is as poor a creature as a dancing-master, and just as great a formalist.

If you ask me, then, why I devote myself to such unrewarding labor, I answer, "It is true I know it to be so, but my apology is, that I make no progress." No, Tom, I never advance a step. I can neither conjugate nor decline, and the auxiliary verbs will never aid me in anything. So far as my lingual incapacity goes, I might be one of the great geniuses of the age; and very probably I am, too, without knowing it!

I have little to tell you of the place itself. It is a quaint old town on the side of the lake; the most remarkable object being the minster, or cathedral. They show you the spot in the aisle where old Huss stood to receive his sentence of death. Even after a lapse of centuries, there was something affecting to stand where a man once stood to hear that he was to be burned alive. Of course I have little sympathy with a heretic, but still I venerate the martyr, the more since I am strongly disposed to think that it is one of those characters which are not the peculiar product of an age of railroads and submarine telegraphs. The expansion of the intelligence, Tom, seems to be in the inverse ratio of the expansion of the conscience, and the stubborn old spirit of right that was once the mode, would nowadays be construed into a dogged, stupid bull-headedness, unworthy of the enlightenment of our glorious era. Take my word for it, there 's a great many eloquent and indignant letter-writers in the newspapers would shrink from old Huss's test for their opinions, and a fossil elk is not a greater curiosity than would be a man ready to stake life on his belief. When a fellow tells you of "dying on the floor of the House," he simply means that he 'll talk till there 's a "count out;" and as for "registering vows in heaven," and "wasting out existence in the gloom of a dungeon," it 's just balderdash, and nothing else.

The simple fact is this, Tom Purcell: we live in an age of universal cant, and I swallow all *your* shams on the easy condition that you swear to *mine*, and whenever I hear people praising the present age, and extolling its wonderful progress, and all that, I just think of all the quackery I see advertised in the newspapers, and sigh heartily to myself at our degradation! Why, man, the "Patent Pills for the Cure of Cancer," and the Agapemone, would disgrace the middle ages! And it is not a little remarkable that England, so prone to place herself at the head of civilization, is exactly the very metropolis of all this humbug!

To come back to ourselves, I have to report that James arrived here a couple of days ago. He followed that scoundrel "the Baron" for thirty hours, and only desisted from the pursuit when his horse could go no farther. The police authorities mainly contributed to the escape of the fugitive, by detaining James on every possible occasion, and upon any or no pretext. The poor fellow reached Freyburg dead beat, and without a sou in his pocket; but good luck would have it that Lord George Tiverton had just arrived there, so that by his aid he came on here, where they both made their appearance at breakfast on Tuesday morning.

Lord George, I suspect, had not made a successful campaign of it lately; though in what he has failed — if it be failure — I have no means of guessing. He looks a little out at elbows, however, and travels without a servant. In spirits and bearing I see no change in him; but these fellows, I have remarked, never show depression, and india-rubber itself is not so elastic as a bad character! I don't half fancy his companionship for James; but I know well that this opinion would be treated by the rest of the family as downright heresy; and certainly he is an amusing dog, and it is impossible to resist liking him; but there lies the very peril I am afraid of. If your loose fish, as the slang phrase calls them, were disagreeable chaps, — prosy, selfish, sententious, — vulgar in their habits, and obtrusive in their manners, one would run little risk of contamination; but the reverse is the case, Tom, — the very reverse! Meet a fellow that speaks every tongue of the Continent, dresses to perfection, rides and drives admirably, a dead shot with the pistol, a sure cue at billiards, — if he be the delight of every circle he goes into, — look out sharp in the "Times," and the odds are that there's a handsome reward offered for him, and he's either a forger or a defaulter. The truth is, a man may be ill-mannered as a great lawyer or a great physician; he may make a great figure in the field or the cabinet; there may be no end to his talents as a geometrician or a chemist; it's only your adventurer must be well-bred, and swindling is the soldiery profession to which a man must bring fascinating manners, a good address, personal advantages, and the power of pleasing. I own to you, Tom Purcell, I like these fellows, and I can't help it! I take to them as I do to twenty things that are agreeable at the time, but are sure to disagree with me — afterwards. They rally me out of my low spirits, they put me on better terms with myself, and they administer that very balmy flattery that says, "Don't distress yourself, Kenny Dodd. As the world goes, you 're better than nine-tenths of it. You 'd be hospitable if you could; you 'd pay your debts if you could; and there would n't be an easier-tempered, more good-natured creature breathing than yourself, if it was only the will was wanting!" Now, these are very soothing doses when a man is scarified by duns, and flayed alive by lawsuits; and when a fellow comes to my time of life, he can no more bear the candid rudeness of what is called friendship than an ex-Lord Mayor could endure Penitentiary diet!

I must confess, however, that whenever we come to divide on any question, Lord George always votes with Mrs. D. He told me once that with respect to Parliament he always sided with the Government, whatever it was, when he could, and perhaps he follows the same rule in private life. Last night, after tea, we discussed our future movements, and I found him strongly in favor of getting us on to Italy for the winter. I did n't like to debate the matter exactly on financial grounds, but I hazarded a half-conjecture that the expedition would be a costly one. He stopped me at once. "Up to this time," said he, "you have really not benefited by the cheapness of Continental living," — that was certainly true, — "and for this simple reason, you have always lived in the beaten track of the wandering cockney. You must go farther away from England. You must reach those places where people settle as residents, not ramble as tourists; you will then be rewarded, not only economically, but socially. The markets and the morals are both better; for our countrymen filter by distance, and the farther from home the purer they become." To Mrs. D. and Mary Anne he gave a glowing description of Trans-Alpine existence, and rapturously pictured forth the fascinations of Italian life. I can only give you the items, Tom; you must arrange them for yourself. So make what you can of starry skies, olives, ices, tenors, volcanoes, music, mountains, and maccaroni. He appealed to *me* by the budget. Never was there such cheapness in the known world. The Italian nobility were actually crushed down with house-accommodation, and only entreated a stranger to accept of a palace or a villa. The climate produced everything without labor, and consequently without cost. Fruit had no price; wine was about twopence a bottle; a strong tap rose to two and a half! Clothes one scarcely needed; and, except for decency, "nothing and a cocked hat" would suffice. These were very seductive considerations, Tom; and I own to you that, even allowing a large margin for exaggeration, there was a great amount of solid advantage remaining. Mrs. D. adduced an additional argument when we were alone, and in this wise: What was to be done with the wedding finery if we should return to Ireland; for all purposes of home life they would be totally inapplicable. You might as well order a service of plate to serve up potatoes as introduce Paris fashions and foreign elegance into our provincial circle. "We have the things now," said she; "let us have the good of them." I remember a cask of Madeira being left with my father once, by a mistake, and that was the very reason he gave for drinking it. She made a strong case of it, Tom; she argued the matter well, laying great stress upon the duty we owed our girls, and the necessity of "getting them married before we went back." Of course, I did n't give in. If I was to give her the notion that she could convince me of anything, we 'd never have a moment's peace again; so I said I 'd reflect on the subject, and turn it over in my mind. And now I want you to say what disposable cash can we lay our hands on for the winter. I am more than ever disinclined to have anything to say to these Drainage Commissioners. It 's our pockets they drain, and not our farms. I 'd rather try and raise a trifle on mortgage; for you see, nowadays, they have got out of the habit of doing it, and there 's many a one has money lying idle and does n't know what to do with it. Look out for one of these fellows, Tom, and see what you can do with him. Dear me, is n't it a strange thing the way one goes through life, and the contrivances one is put to to make two ends meet!

I remember the time, and so do you too, when an Irish gentleman could raise what he liked; and there was n't an estate in my own county was n't encumbered, as they call it, to more than double its value. There 's fellows will tell you "that 's the cause of all the present distress." Not a bit of it. They're all wrong! It is because that system has come to an end that we are ruined; that's the root of the evil, Tom Purcell; and if I was in Parliament I'd tell them so. Where will you find any one willing to lend money now if the estate would n't pay it? We may thank the English Government for that; and, as poor Dan used to say, "They know as much about us as the Chinese!"

I can't answer your question about James. Vickars has not replied to my last two letters; and I really see no opening for the boy whatever. I mean to write, however, in a day or two to Lord Muddleton, to whom Lord George is nearly related, and ask for something in the Diplomatic way. Lord G. says it's the only career nowadays does n't require some kind of qualification, — since even in the army they've instituted a species of examination. "Get him made an Attaché somewhere," says Tiverton, "and he must be a 'Plenipo' at last." J. is good-looking, and a great deal of dash about him; and I'm informed that's exactly what's wanting in the career. If nothing comes of this application, I'll think seriously of Australia; but, of course, Mrs. D. must know nothing about it; for, according to *her* notions, the boy ought to be Chamberlain to the Queen, or Gold-stick at least.

I don't know whether I mentioned to you that Betty Cobb had entered the holy bonds with a semi-civilized creature she picked up in the Black Forest. The orang-outang is now a part of our household, — at least so far as living at rack and manger at my cost, — though in what way to employ him I have not the slightest notion. Do you think, if I could manage to send him over to Ireland, that we could get him indicted for any transportable offence? Ask Curtis about it; for I know he did something of the kind once in the case of a natural son of Tony Barker's, and the lad is now a judge, I believe, in Sydney.

Cary is quite well. I heard from her yesterday, and when I write, I'll be sure to send her your affectionate message. I don't mean to leave this till I hear from you. So write immediately and believe me,

Very sincerely your friend,
KENNY JAMES DODD.

LETTER II.

JAMES DODD TO ROBERT DOOLAN, ESQ., TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

BREGENZ.

MY DEAR BOB, — I had made up my mind not to write to you till we had quitted this place, where our life has been of the "slowest;" but this morning has brought a letter with a piece of good news which I cannot defer imparting to you. It is a communication from the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the governor, to say that I have been appointed to something somewhere, and that I am to come over to London, and be examined by somebody. Very vague all this, but I suppose it's the style of Diplomacy, and one will get used to it. The real bore is the examination, for George told "dad" that there was none, and, in fact, that very circumstance it was which gave the peculiar value to the "service." Tiverton tells me, however, he can make it "all safe;" whether you "tip" the Secretary, or some of the underlings, I don't know. Of course there is a way in all these things, for half the fellows that pass are just as ignorant as your humble servant.

I am mainly indebted to Tiverton for the appointment, for he wrote to everybody he could think of, and made as much interest as if it was for himself. He tells me, in confidence, that the list of names down is about six feet long, and actually wonders at the good fortune of my success. From all I can learn, however, there is no salary at first, so that the governor must "stump out handsome," for an Attaché is expected to live in a certain style, keep horses, and, in fact, come it "rayther strongish." In some respects, I should have preferred the army; but then there are terrible drawbacks in colonial banishment, whereas in

Diplomacy you are at least stationed in the vicinity of a Court, which is always something.

I wonder where I am to be gazetted for; I hope Naples, but even Vienna would do. In the midst of our universal joy at my good fortune, it 's not a little provoking to see the governor pondering over all it will cost for outfit, and wondering if the post be worth the gold lace on the uniform. Happily for me, Bob, he never brought me up to any profession, as it is called, and it is too late now to make me anything either in law or physic. I say happily, because I see plainly enough that he 'd refuse the present opportunity if he knew of any other career for me. My mother does not improve matters by little jokes on his low tastes and vulgar ambitions; and, in fact, the announcement has brought a good deal of discussion and some discord amongst us.

I own to you, frankly, that once named to a Legation, I will do my utmost to persuade the governor to go back to Ireland. In the first place, nothing but a very rigid economy at Dodsborough will enable him to make me a liberal allowance; and secondly, to have my family prowling about the Legation to which I was attached would be perfectly insufferable. I like to have my father and mother what theatrical folk call "practicable," that is, good for all efficient purposes of bill-paying, and such-like; but I shudder at the notion of being their pioneer into fashionable life; and, indeed, I am not aware of any one having carried his parent on his back since the days of Æneas.

I am obliged to send you a very brief despatch, for I 'm off to-morrow for London, to make my bow at "F. O.," and kiss hands on my appointment. I 'd have liked another week here, for the fishing has just come in, and we killed yesterday, with two rods, eleven large, and some thirty small trout. They are a short, thick-shouldered kind of fish, ready enough to rise, but sluggish to play afterwards. The place is pretty, too; the Swiss Alps at one side, and the Tyrol mountains at the other. Bregenz itself stands well, on the very verge of the lake, and although not ancient enough to be curious in architecture, has a picturesque air about it. The people are as primitive as anything one can well fancy, and wear a costume as ungracefully barbarous as any lover of nationality could desire. Their waists are close under their arms, and the longest petticoats I have yet seen finish at the knee! They affect, besides, a round, low-crowned cap, like a fur turban, or else a great piece of filigree sliver, shaped like a peacock's tail, and fastened to the back of the head. Nature, it must be owned, has been somewhat ungenerous to them; and with the peculiar advantages conferred on them by costume, they are the ugliest creatures I 've ever set eyes on.

It is only just to remark that Mary Anne dissents from me in all this, and has made various "studies" of them, which are, after all, not a whit more flattering than my own description. As to a good-looking peasantry, Bob, it 's all humbug. It 's only the well-to-do classes, in any country, have pretensions to beauty. The woman of rank numbers amongst her charms the unmistakable stamp of her condition. Even in her gait, like the Goddess in Virgil, she displays her divinity. The pretty "bourgeoise" has her peculiar fascination in the brilliant intelligence of her laughing eye, and the sly archness of her witty mouth; but your peasant beauty is essentially heavy and dull. It is of the earth, earthy; and there is a bucolic grossness about the lips the very antithesis to the pleasing. I 'm led to these remarks by the question in your last as to the character of Continental physiognomy. Up to this, Bob, I have seen nothing to compare with our own people, and you will meet more pretty faces between Stephen's Green and the Rotunda than between Schaffhausen and the sea. I 'm not going to deny that they "make up" better abroad, but our boast is the raw material of beauty. The manufactured article we cannot dispute with them. It would be, however, a great error to suppose that the artistic excellence I speak of is a small consideration; on the contrary, it is a most important one, and well deserving of deep thought and reflection, and. I must say, that all our failures in the decorative arts are as nothing to our blunders when attempting to adorn beauty. A French woman, with a skin like an old drumhead, and the lower jaw of a baboon, will actually "get herself up" to look better than many a really pretty girl of our country, disfigured by unbecoming hairdressing, ill-assorted colors, ill-put-on clothes, and that confounded walk, which is a cross between the stride of a Grenadier and running in a sack!

With all our parade of Industrial Exhibitions and shows of National Productions lately, nobody has directed his attention to this subject, and, for *my* part, I 'd infinitely rather know that our female population had imbibed some notions of dress and self-adornment from their French neighbors, than that Glasgow could rival Genoa in velvet, or that we beat Bohemia out of the field in colored glass. If the proper study of mankind be man, — which, of course, includes woman, — we are throwing a precious deal of time away on centrifugal pumps, sewing-machines, and self-acting razors. If I ever get into Parliament, Bob, and I don't see why I should not, when once fairly launched in the Diplomatic line, I 'll move for a Special Commission, not to examine into foreign railroads, or mines, or schools, or smelting-houses, but to inquire into and report upon how the women abroad, with not a tenth of the natural advantages, contrive to look, — I won't say better, but more fascinating than our own, — and how it is that they convert something a shade below plainness into features of downright pleasing expression!

Since this appointment has come, I have been working away to brush up my French and German, which you will be surprised to hear is pretty nearly where it was when we first came abroad. We English herd so much together, and continue to follow our home habits and use our own language wherever we happen to be, that it is not very easy to break out of the beaten track. This observation applies only to the men of the family, for our sisters make a most astonishing progress, under the guidance of those mustachioed and well-whiskered gents they meet at balls. The governor and my mother of course believe that I am as great a linguist as Mezzofanti, if that be the fellow's name, and I shall try and keep up the delusion to the last. It is not quite impossible I may have more time for my studies here than I fancy, for "dad" has come in, this moment, to say that he has n't got five shillings towards the expenses of my journey to London, nor has he any very immediate prospect of a remittance from Ireland. What a precious mess will it be if my whole career in life is to be sacrificed for a shabby hundred or two! The governor appears to have spent about three times as much as he speculated on, and our affairs at this moment present as pleasant a specimen of hopeless entanglement as a counsel in Bankruptcy could desire.

I wish I was out of the ship altogether, Bob, and would willingly adventure on the broad ocean of life in a punt, were it only my own. I trust that by the time this reaches you her Majesty's gracious pleasure will have numbered me amongst the servants of the Crown; but whether in high or humble estate, believe me ever

Unalterably yours,

James Dodd.

P. S. My sister Cary has written to say she will be here to-night or to-morrow; she is coming expressly to see me before I go; but from all that I can surmise she need not have used such haste. What a bore it will be if the governor should not be able to "stump out"! I'm in a perfect fever at the very thought.

LETTER III.

CAROLINE DODD TO MISS COX AT MISS MINCING'S ACADEMY, BLACK ROCK, IRELAND.

My dear Miss Cox, — It would appear, from your last, that a letter of mine to you must have miscarried; for I most distinctly remember having written to you on the topics you allude to, and, so far as I was able, answered all your kind inquiries about myself and my pursuits. Lest my former note should ever reach you, I do not dare to go over again the selfish narrative which would task even your friendship to peruse once.

I remained with my kind friend, Mrs. Morris, till three days ago, when I came here to see my brother James, who has been promised some Government employment, and is obliged to repair at once to London. Mamma terrified me greatly by saying that he was to go to China or to India, so that I hurried back to see and stay with him as much as I could before he left us. I rejoice, however, to tell you that his prospects are in the Diplomatic service, and he will be most probably named to a Legation in some European capital.

He is a dear, kind-hearted boy; and although not quite untainted by the corruptions which are more or less inseparable from this rambling existence, is still as fresh in his affections, and as generous in nature, as when he left home. Captain Morris, whose knowledge of life is considerable, predicts most favorably of him, and has only one misgiving, — the close intimacy he maintains with Lord George Tiverton. Towards this young nobleman the Captain expresses the greatest distrust and dislike; feelings that I really own seem to me to be frequently tinctured by a degree of prejudice rather than suggested by reason. It is true, no two beings can be less alike than they are. The one, rigid and unbending in all his ideas of right, listening to no compromise, submitting to no expediency, reserved towards strangers even to the verge of stiffness, and proud from a sense that his humble station might by possibility expose him to freedoms he could not reciprocate. The other, all openness and candor, pushed probably to an excess, and not unfrequently transgressing the barrier of an honorable self-esteem; without the slightest pretension to principle of any kind, and as ready to own his own indifference as to ridicule the profession of it by another. Yet, with all this, kind and generous in all his impulses, ever willing to do a good-natured thing; and, so far as I can judge, even prepared to bear a friendly part at the hazard of personal inconvenience.

Characters of this stamp are, as you have often observed to me, far more acceptable to very young men than those more swayed by rigid rules of right; and when they join to natural acuteness considerable practical knowledge of life, they soon obtain a great influence over the less gifted and less experienced. I see this in James; for, though not by any means blind to the blemishes in Lord George's character, nor even indifferent to them, yet is he submissive to every dictate of his will, and an implicit believer in all his opinions. But why should I feel astonished at this? Is not his influence felt by every member of the family; and papa himself, with all his native shrewdness, strongly disposed to regard his judgments as wise and correct? I remark this the more because I have been away from home, and after an absence one returns with a mind open to every new impression; nor can I conceal from myself that many of the notions I now see adopted and approved of, are accepted as being those popular in high society, and not because of their intrinsic correctness. Had we remained in Ireland, my dear Miss Cox, this had never been the case. There is a corrective force in the vicinity of those who have known us long and intimately, who can measure our pretensions by our station, and pronounce upon our mode of life from the knowledge they have of our condition; and this discipline, if at times severe and even unpleasant, is, upon the whole, beneficial to us. Now, abroad, this wholesome — shall I call it — "surveillance" is wanting altogether, and people are induced by its very absence to give themselves airs, and assume a style quite above them. From that very moment they insensibly adopt a new standard of right and wrong, and substitute fashion and conventionality for purity and good conduct. I 'm sure I wish we were back in Dodsborough with all my heart! It is not that there are not objects and scenes of intense interest around us here on every hand. Even I can feel that the mind expands by the variety of impressions that continue to pour in upon it. Still, I would not say that these things may not be bought too dearly; and that if the price they cost is discontent at our lot in life, a craving ambition to be higher and richer, and a cold shrinking back from all of our own real condition, they are unquestionably not worth the sacrifice.

To really enjoy the Continent it is not necessary — at least, for people bred and brought up as we have been — to be very rich; on the contrary, many — ay, and the greatest — advantages of Continental travel are open to very small fortunes and very small ambitions. Scenery, climate, inexpensive acquaintanceship, galleries, works of art, public libraries, gardens, promenades, are all available. The Morrises have certainly much less to live on than we have, and yet they have travelled over every part of Europe, know all its cities well, and never found the cost of living considerable. You will smile when I tell you that the single secret for this is, not to cultivate English society. Once make up your mind abroad to live with the people of the country, French, German, and Italian, — and there is no class of these above the reach of well-bred English, — and you need neither shine in equipage nor excel in a cook. There is no pecuniary test of respectability abroad; partly because this vulgarity is the offspring of a commercial spirit, which is, of course, not the general characteristic, and partly from the fact that many of the highest names have been brought down to humble fortunes by the accidents of war and revolution, and poverty is, consequently, no evidence of deficient birth. Our gorgeous notions of hospitality are certainly very fine things, and well become great station and large fortune, but are ruinous when they are imitated by inferior means and humble incomes. Foreigners are quite above such vulgar mimicry; and nothing is more common to hear than the avowal, "I am too poor to do this; my fortune would not admit of that;" not uttered in a mock humility, or with the hope of a polite incredulity, but in all the unaffected simplicity with which one mentions a personal fact, to which no shame or disgrace attaches. You may imagine, then, how unimpressively fall upon the ear all those pompous announcements by which we travelling English herald our high and mighty notions; the palaces we are about to hire, the *fêtes* we are going to give, and the other splendors we mean to indulge in.

I have read and re-read that part of your letter wherein you speak of your wish to come and live abroad, so soon as the fruits of your life of labor will enable you. Oh, my dear kind governess, with what emotion the words filled me, — emotions very different from those you ever suspected they would call up; for I bethought me how often I and others must have added to that toilsome existence by our indolence, our carelessness, and our wilfulness. In a moment there rose before me the anxieties you must have suffered, the cares you must have endured, the hopes for those who threw all their burdens upon *you*, and left to *you* the blame of *their* shortcomings and the reproach of *their* insufficiency.

What rest, what repose would ever requite such labor! How delighted am I to say that there are places abroad where even the smallest fortunes will suffice. I profited by the permission you gave me to show your letter to Mrs. Morris, and she gave me in return a list of places for you to choose from, at any one of which you could live with comfort for less than you speak of. Some are in Belgium, some in Germany, and some in Italy. Think, for instance, of a small house on the "Meuse," in the midst of the most beauteous scenery, and with a country teeming in every abundance around you, for twelve pounds a year, and all the material of life equally cheap in proportion. Imagine the habits of a Grand-Ducal capital, where the Prime

Minister receives three hundred per annum, and spends two; where the admission to the theatre is fourpence, and you go to a Court dinner on foot at four o'clock in the day, and sit out of an evening with your work in a public garden afterwards.

Now, I know that in Ireland or Scotland, and perhaps in Wales too, places might be discovered where all the ordinary wants of life would not be dearer than here, but then remember that to live with this economy at home, you subject yourself to all that pertains to a small estate; you endure the barbarizing influences of a solitary life, or, what is worse, the vulgarity of village society. The well-to-do classes, the educated and refined, will not associate with you. Not so here. Your small means are no barrier against your admission into the best circles; you will be received anywhere. Your black silk gown will be "toilet" for the "Minister's reception," your white muslin will be good enough for a ball at Court! When the army numbers in its cavalry fifty hussars, and one battalion for its infantry, the simple resident need never blush for his humble retinue, nor feel ashamed that a maid-servant escorts him to a Court entertainment with a lantern, or that a latch-key and a lucifer-match do duty for a hall-porter and a chandelier!

One night — I was talking of these things — Captain Morris quoted a Latin author to the effect "that poverty had no such heavy infliction as in its power to make people ridiculous." The remark sounds at first an unfeeling one, but there is yet a true and deep philosophy in it, for it is in our own abortive and silly attempts to gloss over narrow fortune that the chief sting of poverty resides, and the ridicule alluded to is all of our making! The poverty of two thousand a year can be thus as glaringly absurd, as ridiculous, as that of two hundred, and even more so, since its failures are more conspicuous.

Now, had we been satisfied to live in this way, it is not alone that we should have avoided debt and embarrassment, but we should really have profited largely besides. I do not speak of the negative advantages of not mingling with those it had been better to have escaped; but that in the society of these smaller capitals there is, especially in

Germany, a highly cultivated and most instructive class, slightly pedantic, it may be, but always agreeable and affable. The domesticity of Germany is little known to us, since even their writers afford few glimpses of it. There are no Bulwers nor Bozes nor Thackerays to show the play of passion, nor the working of deep feeling around the family board and hearth. The cares of fathers, the hopes of sons, the budding anxieties of the girlish heart, have few chroniclers. How these people think and act and talk at home, and in the secret circle of their families, we know as little as we do of the Chinese. It may be that the inquiry would require long and deep and almost microscopic study. Life with them is not as with us, a stormy wave-tossed ocean; it is rather a calm and landlocked bay. They have no colonial empires, no vast territories for military ambition to revel in, nor great enterprise to speculate on. There are neither gigantic schemes of wealth, nor gold-fields to tempt them. Existence presents few prizes, and as few vicissitudes. The march of events is slow, even, and monotonous, and men conform themselves to the same measure! How, then, do they live, — what are their loves, their hates, their ambitions, their crosses, their troubles, and their joys? How are they moved to pity, — how stirred to revenge? I own to you I cannot even fancy this. The German heart seems to me a clasped volume; and even Goethe has but shown us a chance page or two, gloriously illustrated, I acknowledge, but closed as quickly as displayed.

Is Marguerite herself a type? I wish some one would tell me. Is that childlike gentleness, that trustful nature, that resistless, passionate devotion, warring with her piety, and yet heightened by it, — are these German traits? They seem so; and yet do these Fräuleins that I see, with yellow hair, appear capable of this headlong and impetuous love. Faust, I 'm convinced, is true to his nationality. He loves like a German, — and is mad, and mystical, fond, dreamy, and devoted by turns.

But all these are not what I look for. I want a family picture — a Teerburgh or a Mieris — painted by a German Dickens, or touched by a native Titmarsh. So far as I have read of it, too, the German Drama does not fill up this void; the comedies of the stage present nothing identical of the people, and yet it appears to me they are singularly good materials for portraiture. The stormy incidents of university life, its curious vicissitudes, and its strange, half-crazed modes of thought blend into the quiet realities of after-life, and make up men such as one sees nowhere else. The tinge of romance they have contracted in boyhood is never thoroughly washed out of their natures, and although statecraft may elevate them to be grave privy councillors, or good fortune select them for its revenue officers, they cherish the old memories of Halle and Heidelberg, and can grow valorous over the shape of a rapier, or pathetic about the color of Fräulein Lydchen's hair.

It is doubtless very presumptuous in *me* to speak thus of a people of whom I have seen so little; but bear in mind, my dear Miss Cox, that I'm rather giving Mrs. Morris's experiences than my own, and, in some cases, in her own very words. She has a very extensive acquaintance in Germany, and corresponds, besides, with many very distinguished persons of that country. Perhaps private letters give a better insight into the habits of a people than most other things, and if so, one should pronounce very favorably of German character from the specimens I have seen. There are everywhere, great truthfulness, great fairness; a willingness to concede to others a standard different from their own; a hopeful tone in all things, and extreme gentleness towards women and children. Of rural life, and of scenery, too, they speak with true feeling; and, as Sir Walter said of Goethe, " they understand trees."

You will wish to hear something of Bregenz, where we are staying at present, and I have little to say beyond its situation in a little bay on the Lake of Constance, begirt with high mountains, amidst which stretches a level flat, traversed by the Rhine. The town itself is scarcely old enough to be picturesque, though from a distance on the lake the effect is very pleasing. A part is built upon a considerable eminence, the ascent to which is by a very steep street, impassable save on foot; at the top of this is an old gateway, the centre of which is ornamented by a grotesque attempt at sculpture, representing a female figure seated on a horse, and, to all seeming, traversing the clouds. The phenomenon is explained by a legend, that tells how a Bregenzer maiden, some three and a half centuries ago, had gone to seek her fortune in Switzerland, and becoming domesticated there in a family, lived for years among the natural enemies of her people. Having learned by an accident one night, that an attack was meditated on her native town, she stole away unperceived, and, taking a horse, swam the current of the Rhine, and reached Bregenz in time to give warning of the threatened assault, and thus rescued her kinsmen and her birthplace from sack and slaughter. This is the act commemorated by the sculpture, and the stormy waves of the river are doubtless typified in what seem to be clouds.

There is, however, a far more touching memory of the heroism preserved than this; for each night, as the watchman goes his round of the village, when he comes to announce midnight, he calls aloud the name of her who at the same dead hour, three centuries back, came to wake the sleeping town and tell them of their peril. I do not know of a monument so touching as this! No bust nor statue, no group of marble or bronze, can equal in association the simple memory transmitted from age to age, and preserved ever fresh and green in the hearts of a remote generation. As one thinks of this, the mind at once reverts to the traditions of the early Church, and insensibly one is led to feel the beauty of those transmitted words and acts, which, associated with place, and bound up with customs not yet obsolete, gave such impressive truthfulness to all the story of our faith. At the same time, it is apparent that the current of tradition cannot long run pure. Even now there are those who scoff at the grateful record of the Bregenzer maiden! Where will her memory be five years after the first railroad traverses the valley of the Vorarlberg? The shrill whistle of the "express" is the death-note to all the romance of life!

Some deplore this, and assert that, with this immense advancement of scientific discovery, we are losing the homely virtues of our fathers. Others pretend that we grow better as we grow wiser, and that increased intelligence is but another form of enlarged goodness. To myself, the great change seems to be that every hour of this progress diminishes the influences of woman, and that, as men grow deeper and deeper engaged in the pursuits of wealth, the female voice is less listened to, and its counsels less heeded and cared for.

But why do I dare to hazard such conjectures to you, so far more capable of judging, so much more able to solve questions like this!

I am sorry not to be able to speak more confidently about my music; but although Germany is essentially the land of song, there is less domestic cultivation of the art than I had expected; or, rather, it is made less a matter of display. Your mere acquaintances seldom or never will sing for your amusement; your friends as rarely refuse you. To our notions, also, it seems strange that men are more given to the art here than women. The Frau is almost entirely devoted to household cares. Small fortunes and primitive habits seem to require this, and certainly no one who has ever witnessed the domestic peace of a German family could find fault with the system.

What has most struck me of all here, is the fact that while many of the old people retain a freshness of feeling, and a warm susceptibility that is quite remarkable, the children are uniformly grave, even to sadness. The bold, dashing, half-reckless boy; the gay, laughing, high-spirited girl, — have no types here. The season of youth, as we understand it, in all its jocund merriment, its frolics, and its wildness, has no existence amongst them. The child of ten seems weighted with the responsibilities of manhood; the little sister carries her keys about, and scolds the maids with all the semblance of maternal rigor. Would that these liquid blue eyes had a more laughing look, and that pretty mouth could open to joyous laughter!

With all these drawbacks, it is still a country that I love to live in, and should leave with regret; besides that, I have as yet seen but little of it, and its least remarkable parts.

Whither we go hence, and when, are points that I cannot inform you on. I am not sure, indeed, if any determination on the subject has been come to. Mamma and Mary Anne seem most eager for Rome and Naples; but though I should anticipate a world of delight and interest in these cities, I am disposed to think that they would prove far too expensive, — at least with our present tastes and habits.

Wherever my destiny, however, I shall not cease to remember my dear governess, nor to convey to her, in all the frankness of my affection, every thought and feeling of her sincerely attached

CAROLINE DODD.

LETTER IV.

MRS. DODD TO MRS. MARY GALLAGHER, DODSBOROUGH.

BREGENZ.

MY DEAR MOLLY, — It's well I ever got your last letter, for it seems there's four places called Freyburg, and they tried the three wrong ones first, and I believe they opened and read it everywhere it stopped. "Much good may it do them," says I, "if they did!" They know at least the price of wool in Kinnegad, and what boneens is bringing in Ballinasloe, not to mention the news you tell of Betty Walsh! I thought I cautioned you before not to write anything like a secret when the letter came through a foreign post, seeing that the police reads everything, and if there's a word against themselves, you're ordered over the frontier in six hours. That's liberty, my dear! But that is not the worst of it, for nobody wants the dirty spalpeens to read about their private affairs, nor to know the secrets of their families. I must say, you are very unguarded in this respect, and poor Betty's mishap is now known to the Emperor of Prussia and the King of Sweden, just as well as to Father Luke and the Coadjutor; and as they say that these courts are always exchanging gossip with each other, it will be back in England by the time this reaches you. Let it be a caution to you in future, or, if you must allude to these events, do it in a way that can't be understood, as you may remark they do in the newspapers. I wish you would n't be tormenting me about coming home and living among my own people, as you call it. Let them pay up the arrears first, Molly, before they think of establishing any claim of the kind on your humble servant. But the fact is, my dear, the longer you live abroad, the more you like it; and going back to the strict rules and habits of England, after it, is for all the world like putting on a strait-waistcoat. If you only heard foreigners the way they talk of us, and we all the while thinking ourselves the very pink of the creation!

But of all the things they 're most severe upon is Sunday. The manner we pass the day, according to their notions, is downright barbarism. No diversion of any kind, no dancing, no theatres; shops shut up, and nothing legal but intoxication. I always tell them that the fault is n't ours, that it 's the Protestants that do these things; for, as Father Maher says, "they 'd put a bit of crape over the blessed sun if they could." But between ourselves, Molly, even we Catholics are greatly behind the foreigners on all matters of civilization. It may be out of fear of the others, but really we don't enjoy ourselves at all like the French or the Germans. Even in the little place I 'm writing now, there 's more amusement than in a big city at home; and if there 's anything I 'm convinced of at all, Molly, it 's this: that there is no keeping people out of great wickedness except by employing them in small sins; and, let me tell you, there 's not a political economist that ever I heard of has hit upon the secret.

We are all in good health, and except that K. I. is in one of his habitual moods of discontent and grumbling, there 's not anything particular the matter with us. Indeed, if it was n't for his natural perverseness of disposition, he ought n't to be cross and disagreeable, for dear James has just been appointed to an elegant situation, on what they call the "Diplomatic Service." When the letter first came, I was almost off in a faint. I did n't know where it might be they might be sending the poor child, — perhaps to Great Carey-o, or the Hymenæal Mountains of India; but Lord George says that it 's at one of the great Courts of Europe he 's sure to be; and, indeed, with his figure and advantages, that 's the very thing to suit him. He 's a picture of a young man, and the very image of poor Tom M'Carthy, that was shot at Ballyhealey the year of the great frost. If he does n't make a great match, I 'm surprised at it; and the young ladies must be mighty different in their notions from what I remember them, besides. Getting him ready and fitting him out has kept us here; for whenever there 's a call upon K. I.'s right-hand pocket, he buttons up the left at once; so that, till James is fairly off, there 's no hope for us of getting away from this. That once done, however, I 'm determined to pass the winter in Italy. As Lord George says, coming abroad and not crossing the Alps, is like going to a dinner-party and getting up after the " roast," — " you have all the solids of the entertainment, but none of the light and elegant trifles that aid digestion, and engage the imagination." It 's a beautiful simile, Molly, and very true besides; for, after all, the heart requires more than mere material enjoyments!

You 're maybe surprised to hear that Lord G. is back here; and so was I to see him. What his intentions are, I 'm unable to say; but it 's surely Mary Anne at all events; and as she knows the world well, I 'm very easy in my mind about her. As I told K. I. last night, "Abuse the Continent as you like, K. I., waste all your bad words about the cookery and the morals and the light wines and women, but there 's one thing you can't deny to it, — there 's no falling in love abroad, — that I maintain!" And when you come to think of it, I believe that 's the real evil of Ireland. Everybody there falls in love, and the more surely when they haven't a sixpence to marry on! All the young lawyers without briefs, all the young doctors in dispensaries, every marching lieutenant living on his pay, every young curate with seventy pounds a year, — in fact, Molly, every case of hopeless poverty, — all what the newspapers call heartrending distress, — is sure to have a sweetheart! When you think of the misery that it brings on a single family, you may imagine the ruin that it entails on a whole country. And I don't speak in ignorance, Mrs. Gallagher; I 've lived to see the misery of even a tincture of love in my own unfortunate fate. Not that indeed I ever went far in my feelings towards K. I., but my youth and inexperience carried me away; and see where they 've left me! Now that 's an error nobody commits abroad; and as to any one being married according to their inclination, it 's quite unheard of; and if they have less love, they have fewer disappointments, and that same is something!

Talking of marriage brings me to Betty, — I suppose I must n't say Betty Cobb, now that she calls herself the Frau Taddy. Has n't she made a nice business of it! "They 're fighting," as K. I. says, "like man and wife, already!" The creature is only half human; and when he has gorged himself with meat and drink, he sometimes sleeps for twenty-four, or maybe thirty hours; and if there 's not something ready for him when he wakes up, his passion is dreadful. I 'm afraid of my life lest K. I. should see the bill for his food, and told the landlord only to put down his four regular meals, and that I 'd pay the rest, which I have managed to do, up to this, by disposing of K. I.'s wearing-apparel. And would you believe it that the beast has already eaten a brown surtout, two waistcoats, and three pairs of kerseymere shorts and gaiters, not to say a spencer that he had for his lunch, and a mackintosh cape that he took the other night before going to bed! Betty is always crying from his bad usage, and consequently of no earthly use to any one; but if a word is said against him, she flies out in a rage, and there 's no standing her tongue!

Maybe, however, it 's all for the best; for without a little excitement to my nervous system, I 'd have found this place very dull. Dr. Morgan Moore, that knew the M'Carthy constitution better than any one living, used to say, "Miss Jemima requires movement and animation;" and, indeed, I never knew any place agree with me like the "Sheds" of Clontarf.

Mary Anne keeps telling me that this is now quite vulgar, and that your people of first fashion are never pleased with anybody or anything; and whenever a place or a party or even an individual is peculiarly tiresome, she says, "Be sure, then, that it 's quite the mode." That is possibly the reason why Lord George reommends us passing a few weeks on the Lake of Comus; and if it 's the right thing to do, I 'm ready and willing; but I own to you, Molly, I 'd like a little sociality, if it was only for a change. At any rate, Comus is in Italy; and if we once get there, it will go far with me if I don't see the Pope. I 'm obliged to be brief this time, for the post closes here whenever the postmaster goes to dinner; and to-day I 'm told he dines early. I 'll write you, however, a full and true account of us all next week, till when, believe me your ever affectionate and attached friend,

JEMIMA DODD.

P. S. Mary Anne has just reconciled me to the notion of Comus. It is really the most aristocratic place in Europe, and she remarks that it is exactly the spot to make excellent acquaintances in for the ensuing winter; for you see, Molly, that is really what one requires in summer and autumn, and the English that live much abroad study this point greatly. But, indeed, there's a wonderful deal to be learned before one can say that they know life on the Continent; and the more I think of it, the less am I surprised at the mistakes and blunders of our travelling countrymen, — errors, I am proud to say, that we have escaped up to this.

LETTER V.

KENNY JAMES DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., OF THE GRANGE, BRUFF.

BREGENZ.

MY DEAR TOM, — Although it is improbable I shall be able to despatch this by the post of to-day, I take the opportunity of a few moments of domestic peace to answer your last — I wish I could say agreeable — letter. It is not that your intentions are not everything that consists with rectitude and honor, or that your sentiments are not always those of a right-minded man, but I beg to observe to you, Tom Purcell, in all the candor of a five-and-forty years' friendship, that you have about the same knowledge of life and the world that a toad has of Lord Rosse's telescope.

We have come abroad for an object, which, whether attainable or not, is not now the question; but if there be any prospect whatever of realizing it, — confound the phrase, but I have no other at hand, — it is surely by an ample and liberal style of living, such as shall place us on a footing of equality with the best society, and make the Dodds eligible anywhere.

I suppose you admit that much. I take it for granted that even bucolic dulness is capable of going so far. Well, then, what do you mean by your incessant appeals to "retrenchment" and "economy"? Don't you see that you make yourself just as preposterous as Cobden, when he says, cut down the estimates, reduce the navy, and dismiss your soldiers, but still be a first-rate power. Tie your hands behind your back, but cry out, "Beware of me, for I 'm dreadful when I 'm angry."

You quote me against myself; you bring up my old letters, like Hansard, against me, and say that all our attempts have been failures; but without calling you to order for referring "to what passed in another place," I will reply to you on your own grounds. If we have failed, it has been because our resources did not admit of our maintaining to the end what we had begun in splendor, — that our means fell short of our requirements, — that, in fact, with a well-chosen position and picked troops, we lost the battle only for want of ammunition, having fired away all our powder in the beginning of the engagement. Whose fault was *that*, I beg to ask? Can the Commissary-General Purcell come clear out of *that* charge?

I know your hair-splitting habit; I at once anticipate your reply. An agent and a commissary are two very different things! And just as flatly I tell you, you are wrong, and that, rightly considered, the duties of both are precisely analogous, and that a general commanding an army, and an Irish landlord travelling on the Continent, present a vast number of points of similitude and resemblance. In the one case as in the other, supplies are indispensable; come what will, the forces must be fed, and if it it would be absurd for the general to halt in his march and inquire into all the difficulties of providing stores, it would be equally preposterous for the landlord to arrest his career by going into every petty grievance of his tenantry, and entering into a minute examination of the state of every cottier on his land. Send the rations, Tom, and I 'll answer for the campaign. I don't mean to say that there are not some hardships attendant upon this. I know that to raise contributions an occasional severity must be employed; but is the fate of a great engagement to be jeopardized for the sake of such considerations? No, no, Tom. Even your spirit will recoil from such an admission as this!

It is only fair to mention that these are not merely my own sentiments. Lord George Tiverton, to whom I happened to show your letter, was really shocked at the contents. I don't wish to offend you, Tom, but the expression he used was, "It is fortunate for your friend Purcell that he is not *my* agent." I will not repeat what he said about the management of English landed property, but it is obvious that our system is not their system, and that such a thing as a landlord in *my* position is actually unheard of. "If Ireland were subject to earthquakes," said he, "if the arable land were now and then covered over ten feet deep with lava, I could understand your agent's arguments; but wanting these causes, they are downright riddles to me."

He was most anxious to obtain possession of your letter; and I learned from Mary Anne that he really meant to use it in the House, and show you up bodily as one of the prominent causes of Irish misery. I have saved you from this exposure, but I really cannot spare you some of the strictures your conduct calls for.

I must also observe to you that there is what the Duke used to call "a terrible sameness" about your letters. The potatoes are always going to rot, the people always going to leave. It rains for ten weeks at a time, and if you have three fine days you cry out that the country is ruined by drought. Just for sake of a little variety, can't you take a prosperous tone for once, instead of ' drawing my attention," as you superciliously phrase it, to the newspaper announcement about "George Davis and other petitioners, and the lands of Ballyclough, Kiltimaon, and Knocknaslattery, being part of the estates of James Kenny Dodd, Esq., of Dodsborough." I have already given you my opinion about that Encumbered Estates Court, and I see no reason for changing it. Confiscation is a mild name for its operation. What Ireland really wanted was a loan fund, — a good round sum, say three and a half or four millions, lent out on reasonable security, but free from all embarrassing conditions. Compel every proprietor to plant so many potatoes for the use of the poor, and get rid of those expensive absurdities called "Unions," with all the lazy, indolent officials; do that, and we might have a chance of prospering once more.

It makes me actually sick to hear you, an Irishman born and bred, repeating all that English balderdash about "a cheap and indisputable title," and so forth. Do you remember about four-and-twenty years ago, Tom, when I wanted to breach a place for a window in part of the old house at Dodsborough, and Hackett warned me that if I touched a stone of it I 'd maybe have the whole edifice come tumbling about my ears. Don't you see the analogy between that and our condition as landlords, and that our real security lay in the fact that nobody could dare to breach us? Meddle with us once, and who could tell where the ruin would fall! So long as the system lasted we were safe, Tom. Now, your Encumbered Court, with its parliamentary title, has upset all that security; and that 's the reason of all the distress and misfortune that have overtaken us.

I think, after the specimen of my opinions, I 'll hear no more of your reproaches about my "growing indifference to home topics," my "apparent apathy regarding Ireland," and other similar reflections in your last letter. Forget my country, indeed! Does a man ever forget the cantharides when he has a blister on his back? If I 'm warm, I 'm sorry for it; but it 's your own fault, Tom Purcell. You know me since I was a child, and understand my temper well; and whatever it was once, it has n't improved by conjugal felicity.

And now for the Home Office. James started last night for London, to go through whatever formalities there may be before receiving his appointment. What it is to be, or where, I have not an idea; but I cling to the hope that when they see the lad, and discover his utter ignorance on all subjects, it will be something very humble, and not requiring a sixpence from me. All that I have seen of the world shows me that the higher you look for your children the more they cost you; and for that reason, if I had my choice, I 'd rather have him a gauger than in the Grenadier Guards. Even as it is, the outfit for this journey has run away with no small share of your late remittance, and now that we have come to the end of the M'Carthy legacy, — the last fifty was "appropriated" by James before starting, — it will require all the financial skill you can command to furnish me with sufficient means for our new campaign.

Yes, Tom, we are going to Italy. I have discussed the matter so long, and so fully argued it in every shape, artistical, philosophical, economical, and moral, that I verily believe that our dialogues would furnish a very respectable manual to Trans-Alpine travellers; and if I am not a convert to the views of my opponents, I am so far vanquished in the controversy as to give in.

Lord George put the matter, I must say, very strongly before me. "To turn your steps homeward from the Alps," said he, "is like the act of a man who, having dressed for an evening party and ascended the stairs, wheels round at the door of the drawing-room, and quits the house. All your previous knowledge of the Continent, so costly and so difficult to attain, is about at length to become profitable; that insight into foreign life and habits which you have arrived at by study and observation, is now about to be available. Italy is essentially the land of taste, elegance, and refinement; and there will all the varied gifts and acquirements of your accomplished family be appreciated." Besides this, Tom, he showed me that the "Snobs," as he politely designated them, are all "Cis-Alpine;" strictly confining themselves to the Rhine and Switzerland, and never descending the southern slopes of the Alps. According to his account, therefore, the climate of Italy is not more marked by superiority than the tone of its society. There all is polished, elegant, and refined; and if the men be "not all brave, and the women all virtuous," it is because "their moral standard is one more in accordance with the ancient traditions, the temper, and the instincts of the people." I quote you his words here, because very possibly they may be more intelligible to you than to myself. At all events, one thing is quite clear, — we ought to go and judge for ourselves, and to this resolve have we come. Tiverton — without whom we should be actually helpless — has arranged the whole affair, and, really, with a regard to economy that, considering his habits and his station, can only be attributed to a downright feeling of friendship for us. By a mere accident he hit upon a villa at Como, for a mere trifle, — he won't tell me the sum, but he calls it a "nothing," — and now he has, with his habitual good luck, chanced upon a return carriage going to Milan, the driver of which horses our carriage, and takes the servants with him, for very little more than the keep of his beasts on the road. This piece of intelligence will tickle every stingy fibre in your economical old heart, and at last shall I know you to mutter, "K. I. is doing the prudent thing."

Tiverton himself says, "It 's not exactly the most elegant mode of travelling; but as the season is early, and the Splügen a pass seldom traversed, we shall slip down to Como unobserved, and save some forty or fifty 'Naps.' without any one being the wiser." Mrs. D. would, of course, object if she had the faintest suspicion that it was inexpensive; but "my Lord," who seems to read her like a book, has told her that it is the very mode in which all the aristocracy travel, and that by a happy piece of fortune we have secured the vetturino that took Prince Albert to Rome, and the Empress of Russia to Palermo!

He has, or he is to find, four horses for our coach, and three for his own; we are to take the charge of bridges, barriers, rafts, and "remounts," and give him, besides, five Napoleons *per diem*, and a "buona mano," or gratuity, of three more, if satisfied, at the end of the journey. Now, nothing could be more economical than this; for we are a large party, and with luggage enough to fill a ship's jolly-boat.

You see, therefore, what it is to have a shrewd and intelligent friend. You and I might have walked the main street of Bregenz till our shoes were thin, before we discovered that the word "Gelegenheit," chalked up on the back-leather of an old *calèche*, meant "A return conveniency to be had cheap." The word is a German one, and means "Opportunity:" and ah! my dear Tom, into what a strange channel does it entice one's thoughts! What curious reflections come across the mind as we think of all our real opportunities in this world, and how little we did of them! Not but there might be a debit side to the account, too, and that some two or three may have escaped us that it was just as well we let pass!

We intended to have left this to-morrow, but Mrs. D. won't travel on a Friday. "It 's an unlucky day," she says, and maybe she 's right. If I don't mistake greatly, it was on a Friday I was married; but of course this is a reminiscence I keep to myself. This reminds me of the question in your postscript, and to which I reply: "Not a bit of it, nothing of the kind. So far as I see, Tiverton feels a strong attachment to James, but never even notices the girls. I ought to add that this is not Mrs. D.'s opinion;

and she is always flouncing into my dressing-room, with a new discovery of a look that he gave Mary Anne, or a whisper that he dropped into Cary's ear. Mothers would be a grand element in a detective police, if they did n't now and then see more than was in sight; but that 's their failing, Tom. The same generous zeal which they employ in magnifying their husbands' faults helps them to many another exaggeration. Now Mrs. D. is what she calls fully persuaded — in other words, she has some shadowy suspicions — that Lord George has formed a strong attachment to one or other of her daughters, the only doubtful point being which of them is to be "my Lady."

Shall I confess to you that I rather cherish the notion than seek to disabuse her of it, and for this simple reason: whenever she is in full cry after grandeur, whether in the shape of an acquaintance, an invitation, or a match for the girls, she usually gives me a little peace and quietness. The peerage, "God bless our old nobility," acts like an anodyne on her.

I give you, therefore, both sides of the question, repeating once more my own conviction that Lord G. has no serious intentions, to use the phrase maternal, whatever. And now to your second query: If not, is it prudent to encourage his intimacy? Why, Tom Purcell, just bethink you for a moment, and see to what a strange condition would your theory, if acted on, resolve all the inhabitants of the globe. Into one or other category they must go infallibly. "Either they want to marry one of the Dodds, or they don't." Now, though the fact is palpable enough, it is for all purposes of action a most embarrassing one; and if I proceed to make use of it, I shall either be doomed to very tiresome acquaintances, or a life of utter solitude and desertion.

Can't a man like your society, your dinners, your port, your jokes, and your cigars, but he must perforce marry one of your daughters? Is your house to be like a rat-trap, and if a fellow puts his head in must he be caught? I don't like the notion at all; and not the less that it rather throws a slight over certain convivial gifts and agreeable qualities for which, once upon a time at least, I used to have some reputation. As to Tiverton, I like *him*, and I have a notion that he likes *me*. We suit each other as well as it is possible for two men bred, born, and brought up so perfectly unlike. We both have seen a great deal of the world, or rather of two worlds, for *his* is not *mine*. At the same time, every remark he makes — and all his observations show me that mankind is precisely the same thing everywhere, and that it is exactly with the same interests, the same impulses, and the same passions my Lord bets his thousands at "Crocky's" that Billy Healey or Father Tom ventures his half-crown at the Pig and Pincers, in Bruff. I used to think that what with races, elections, horse-fairs, and the like, I had seen my share of rascality or roguery; but, compared to my Lord's experiences, I might be a babe in the nursery. There is n't a dodge — not a piece of knavery that was ever invented — he does n't know. Trickery and deception of every kind are all familiar to him, and, as he says himself, he only wants a few weeks in a convict settlement to put the finish on his education.

You 'd fancy, from what I say, that he must be a cold, misanthropic, suspectful fellow, with an ill-natured temper, and a gloomy view of everybody and everything. Far from it, his whole theory of life is benevolent; and his maxim, to believe every one honorable, trustworthy, and amiable. I see the half-cynical smile with which you listen to this, and I already know the remark that trembles on your lip. You would say that such a code cuts both ways, and that a man who pronounces so favorably of his fellows almost secures thereby a merciful verdict on himself. In fact, that he who passes base money can scarcely refuse, now and then, to accept a bad halfpenny in change. Well, Tom, I 'll not argue the case with you, for if not myself a disciple of this creed, I have learned to think that there are very few, indeed, who are privileged to play censor upon their acquaintances, and that there is always the chance that when you are occupied looking at your neighbor drifting on a lee shore, you may bump on a rock yourself.

You said in your last that you thought me more lax than I used to be about right and wrong, — "less strait-laced," you were polite enough to call it; and with an equal urbanity you ascribed this change in me to the habits of the Continent. I am proud to say "Guilty" to the charge, and I believe you are right as to the cause. Yes, Tom, the tone of society abroad is eminently merciful, and it must needs be a bad case where there are no attenuating circumstances. So much the worse, say you; where vice is leniently looked on, it will be sure to flourish. To which I answer, Show me where it does not! Is it in the modern Babylon, is it in moral Scotland, or drab-colored Washington? On my conscience, I don't believe there is more of wickedness in a foreign city than a home one; the essential difference being that we do wrong with a consciousness of our immorality; whereas the foreigner has a strong impression that after all it 's only a passing frailty, and that human nature was not ever intended to be perfect. Which system tends most to corrupt a people, and which creates more hopeless sinners, I leave to you, and others as fond of such speculations, to ponder over.

Another charge — for your letter has as many counts as an indictment — another you make against me is that I seem as if I was beginning to like — or, as you modestly phrase it — as if I was getting more reconciled to the Continent. Maybe I am, now that I have learned how to qualify the light wines with a little brandy, and to make my dinner of the eight or nine, instead of the two-and-thirty dishes they serve up to you; and since I have trained myself to walk the length of a street, in rain or sunshine, without my hat, and have attained to the names of the cards at whist in a foreign tongue, I believe I do feel more at home here than at first; but still I am far, very far, in arrear of the knowledge that a man bred and born abroad would possess at my age. To begin, Tom: He would be a perfect cook; you could n't put a clove of garlic too little, or an olive too much, without his detecting it in the dish. Secondly, he would be curious in snuffs, and a dead hand at dominos; then he would be deep in the private histories of the ballet, and tell you the various qualities of short-draperied damsels that had figured on the boards for the last thirty years. These, and such-like, would be the consolations of his declining years; and of these I know absolutely next to nothing. Who knows, however, but I may improve? The world is a wonderful schoolmaster, and if Mrs. D. is to be believed, I am an apt scholar whenever the study is of an equivocal kind.

We hope to spend the late autumn at Como, and then step down into some of the cities of the South for the winter months. The approved plan is Florence till about the middle of January, Rome till the beginning of Lent, then Naples till the Holy Week, whence back again for the ceremonies. After that, northward wherever you please. All this sounds like a good deal of locomotion, and, consequently, of expense; but Lord G. says, "Just leave it to *me.* I'll be your courier;" and as he not only performs that function, but unites with it that of banker, — he can get anything discounted at any moment, — I am little disposed to depose him from his office. Now no more complaints that I have not replied to you about this, that, and t' other, not informed you about our future movements, nor given you any hint as to our plans: you know everything about us, at least so far as it is known to your

Very sincere friend,
KENNY I. DODD.

As I mentioned in the beginning, I am too late for the post, so I'll keep this open if anything should occur to me before the next mail.

THE INN, SPLUGEN, Monday.

I thought this was already far on its way to you; but, to my great surprise, on opening my writing-desk this morning, I discovered it there still. The truth is, I grow more absent, and what the French call "distracted," every day; and it frequently happens that I forget some infernal bill or other, till the fellow knocks at the door with "the notice." Here we are, at a little inn on the very top of the Alps. We arrived yesterday, and, to our utter astonishment, found ourselves suddenly in a land of snow and icebergs. The whole way from Bregenz the season was a mellow autumn: some of the corn was still standing, but most was cut, and the cattle turned out over the stubble; the trees were in full leaf, and the mountain rivulets were clear and sparkling, for no rain had fallen for some time back. It was a picturesque road and full of interest in many ways. From Coire we made a little excursion across the Rhine to a place called Ragatz, — a kind of summer resort for visitors who come to bathe and drink the waters of Pfeffers, one of the most extraordinary sights I ever beheld. These baths are built in a cleft of the mountain, about a thousand feet in depth, and scarcely thirty wide in many parts; the sides of the precipices are straight as a wall, and only admit of a gleam of the sun when perfectly vertical. The gloom and solemnity of the spot, its death-like stillness and shade, even at noonday, are terribly oppressive. Nor is the sadness dispelled by the living objects of the picture, — Swiss, Germans, French, and Italians, swathed in flannel dressing-gowns and white dimity cerements, with nightcaps and slippers, steal along the gloomy corridors and the gloomier alleys, pale, careworn, and cadaverous. They come here for health, and their whole conversation is sickness. Now, however consoling it may be to an invalid to find a recipient of his sorrows, the price of listening in turn is a tremendous infliction. Nor is the character of the scene such as would probably suggest agreeable reflections; had it been the portico to the nameless locality itself, it could not possibly be more dreary and sorrow-stricken. Now, whatever virtues the waters possess, is surely antagonized by all this agency of gloom and depression; and except it be as a preparation for leaving the world without regret, this place seems to be marvellously ill adapted for its object. It appears to me, however, that foreigners run into the greatest extremes in these matters; a sick man must either live in a perpetual Vauxhall of fireworks, music, dancing, dining, and gambling, as at Baden, or be condemned to the worse than penitentiary diet and prison discipline of Pfeffers! Surely there must be some halting-place between the ball-room and the cloister, or some compromise of costume between silk stockings and bare feet! But really, to a thinking, reasonable being, it appears very distressing that you must either dance out of the world to Strauss's music, or hobble miserably out of life to the sound of the falling waters of Pfeffers.

Does it not sound, also, very oddly to our free-trade notions of malady, that the doctor of these places is appointed by the State; that without his sanction and opinion of your case, you must neither bathe nor drink; that no matter how satisfied you may be with your own physician, nor how little to your liking the Government medico, he has the last word on the subject of your disorder, and without his wand the pool is never to be stirred in your behalf. You don't quite approve of this, Tom, — neither do I. The State has no more a right to choose my doctor than to select a wife for me. If there be anything essentially a man's own prerogative, it is his — what shall I call it? — his caprice about his medical adviser. One man likes a grave, sententious, silently disposed fellow, who feels his pulse, shakes his head, takes his fee, and departs, with scarcely more than a muttered monosyllable; another prefers the sympathetic doctor, that goes half-and-half in all his sufferings, lies awake at night thinking of his case, and seems to rest his own hopes of future bliss in life on curing him. As for myself, I lean to the fellow that, no matter what ails me, is sure to make me pass a pleasant half-hour; that has a lively way of laughing down all my unpleasant symptoms, and is certain to have a droll story about a patient that he has just come from. That 's the man for my money; and I wish you could tell me where a man gets as good value as for the guinea he gives to one of these. Now, from what I have seen of the Continent, this is an order of which they have no representative. All the professional classes, but more essentially the medical, are taken from an inferior grade in society, neither brought up in intercourse with the polite world, nor ever admitted to it afterwards. The consequence is, that your doctor comes to visit you as your shoemaker to measure you for shoes, and it would be deemed as great a liberty were he to talk of anything but your complaint, as for Crispin to impart his sentiments about Russia or the policy of Louis Napoleon. I don't like the system, and I am convinced it does n't work well. If I know anything of human nature, too, it is this, — that nobody tells the whole truth to his physician *till he can't help it.* No, Tom, it only comes out after a long cross-examination, great patience, and a deal of dodging; and for these you must have no vulgarly minded, commonplace, underbred fellow, but a consummate man of the world, who knows when you are bamboozling him and when fencing him off with a sham. He must be able to use all the arts of a priest in the confessional, and an advocate in a trial, with a few more of his own not known to either, to extort your secret from you; and I am sure that a man of vulgar habits and low associations is not the best adapted for this.

I wanted to stop and dine with this lugubrious company. I was curious to see what they ate, and whether their natures attained any social expansion under the genial influences of food and drink; but Mrs. D. would n't hear of it. She had detected, she said, an "impudent hussy with black eyes" bestowing suspicious glances at your humble servant. I thought that she was getting out of these fancies, — I fondly hoped that a little peace on these subjects would in a degree reconcile me to many of the discomforts of old age; but, alas! the gray hairs and the stiff ankles have come, and no writ of ease against conjugal jealousies. Away we came, fresh and fasting, and as there was nothing to be had at Ragatz, we were obliged to go on to Coire before we got supper; and if you only knew what it is to arrive at one of these foreign inns after the hour of the ordinary meals, you 'd confess there was little risk of our committing an excess.

I own to you, Tom, that the excursion scarcely deserved to be called a pleasant one. Fatigue, disappointment, and hunger are but ill antagonized by an outbreak of temper; and Mrs. D. lightened the way homeward by a homily on fidelity that would have made Don Juan appear deserving of being canonized as a saint! I must also observe that Tiverton's conduct on this occasion was the very reverse of what I expected from him. A shrewd, keen fellow like him could not but know in his heart that Mrs. D.'s suspicions were only nonsense and absurdity; and yet what did he do but play shocked and horrified, agreed completely with every ridiculous notion of my wife, and actually went so far as to appeal to me as a father against myself as a profligate. I almost choked with passion; and if it was not that we were under obligations to him about James's business, I 'm not certain I should not have thrown him out of the coach. I wish to the saints that the women would take to any other line of suspicion, even for the sake of variety, — fancy me an incurable drunkard, a gambler, an uncertificated bankrupt, or a forger. I 'm not certain if I would not accept the charge of a transportable felony rather than be regarded as the sworn enemy of youth and virtue, and the snake in the grass to all unprotected females.

From Coire we travelled on to Reichenau, a pretty village at the foot of the Alps, watered by the Rhine, which is there a very inconsiderable stream, and with as little promise of future greatness as any barrister of six years' standing you please to mention. There is a neat-looking chateau, which stands on a small terrace above the river here, not without a certain interest attached to it. It was here that Louis Philippe, then Duke of Orleans, taught mathematics in the humble capacity of usher to a school. Just fancy that deep politician — the wiliest head in all Europe, with the largest views of statecraft, and the most consummate knowledge of men — instilling angles and triangles into impracticable numskulls, and crossing the Asses' bridge ten times a day with lame and crippled intellects.

It would be curious to know what views of mankind, what studies of life, he made during this period. Such a man was not made to suffer any opportunity, no matter how inconsiderable in itself, to escape him without profiting; and it may be easily believed that in the monarchy of a school he might have meditated over the rule of large masses.

History can scarcely present greater changes of fortune than those that have befallen that family, which is the more singular, since they have been brought about neither by great talents nor great crimes. The Orleans family was more remarkable for the qualities which shine in the middle ranks of life than either for any towering genius or any unscrupulous ambition. Their strength was essentially in this mediocrity, and it was a momentary forgetfulness of that same stronghold — by the Spanish marriage — that cost the King his throne. The truth was, Tom, that the nation never liked us, — they hated England just as they hated it at Cressy, at Blenheim, and at Waterloo, and will hate it, notwithstanding your great Industrial gatherings, to the end of time. They were much dissatisfied with Louis Philippe's policy of an English alliance; they deemed it disadvantageous, costly, and humiliating; but that it should be broken up and destroyed for an object of mere family, for a piece of dynastic ambition, was a gross outrage and affront to the spirit of national pride. It was the sentiment of insulted honor that leagued the followers of the Orleans branch with the Legitimists and the Republicans, and formed that terrible alliance that extended from St. Antoine to the Faubourg St. Germain, and included every one from the peer to the common laborer.

All this prosing about politics will never take us over the Alps; and, indeed, so far as I can see, there is small prospect of that event just now; for it has been snowing smartly all night, with a strong southerly wind, which they say always leaves heavy drifts in different parts of the mountain.

We are cooped up here in a curious, straggling kind of an inn, that gradually dwindles away into a barn, a stable, and a great shed, filled with disabled diligences and smashed old sledges, — an incurable asylum for diseased conveyances. The house stands in a cleft of the hills; but from the windows you can see the zigzag road that ascends for miles in front, and which now is only marked by long poles, already some ten or twelve feet deep in snow. It is snow on every side, — on the mountains, on the roofs, on the horses that stand shaking their bells at the door, on the conducteur that drinks his schnaps, on the postilion as he lights his pipe. The thin flakes are actually plating his whiskers and moustaches, till he looks like one of the "Old Guard," as we see them in a melodrama.

Tiverton, who conducts all our arrangements, has had a row with our vetturino, who says that he never contracted to take us over the mountain in sledges; and as the carriages cannot run on wheels, here we are discussing the question. There have been three stormy debates already, and another is to come off this afternoon; meanwhile, the snow is falling heavily, and whatever chance there was of getting forward yesterday is now ten times less practicable. The landlord of our inn is to be arbiter, I understand; and as he is the proprietor of the sledges we shall have to hire, if defeated, without impugning in any way the character of Alpine justice, you can possibly anticipate the verdict.

A word upon this vetturino system ere I leave it, — I hope forever. It is a perfect nuisance from beginning to end. From the moment you set off with one of these rascals, till the hour you arrive at your journey's end, it is plague, squabble, insolence, and torment. They start at what hour of the morning they please; they halt where they like, and for as long as they like, invariably, too, at the worst wayside inns, — away from a town and from all chance of accommodation, — since rye-bread and sour wine, with a mess of stewed garlic, will always satisfy *them*. They rarely drive at full five miles the hour, and walk every inch with an ascent of a foot in a hundred yards. If expostulated with by the wretched traveller, they halt in some public place, and appeal to the bystanders in some dialect unknown to you. The result of which is that a ferocious mob surrounds you, and with invectives, insults, and provocative gestures assail and outrage you, till it please your tormentor to drive on; which you do at length amidst hooting and uproar that even convicted felons would feel ashamed of.

On reaching your inn at night, they either give such a representation of you as gets you denied admittance at all, or obtain for you the enviable privilege of paying for everything "en Milor." Between being a swindler and an idiot the chance alone lies for you. Then they refuse to unstrap your luggage; or if they do so, tie it on again so insecurely that it is sure to drop off next day. I speak not of a running fire of petty annoyances; such as fumigating you with pestilent tobacco, nor the blessed enjoyment of that infernal Spitz dog which stands all day on the roof, and barks every mile of the road from Berne to Naples. As to any redress against their insolence, misconduct, or extortion, it is utterly hopeless, — and for this reason: they are sure to have a hundred petty occasions of rendering small services to the smaller authorities of every village they frequent. They carry the judge's mother for nothing to a watering-place; or they fetch his aunt to the market town; or they smuggle for him — or thieve for him — something that is only to be had over the frontier. Very probably, too, on the very morning of your appeal, you have kicked the same judge's brother, he being the waiter of your inn, and having given you bad money in change, — at all events, *you* are not likely ever to be met with again; the vetturino is certain to come back within the year; and, finally, you are sure to have money, and be able to pay, — so that, as the Irish foreman said, as the reason for awarding heavy damages against an Englishman, "It is a fine thing to bring so much money into the country."

Take my word for it, Tom, the system is a perfect disgust from beginning to end, and even its cheapness only a sham; for your economy is more than counterbalanced by police fees, fines, and impositions, delays, remounts, bulls, and starved donkeys, paid for at a price they would not bring if sold at a market. Post, if you can afford it; take the public conveyances, if you must; but for the sake of all that is decent and respectable, — all that consists with comfort and self-respect, — avoid the vetturino! I know that a contrary opinion has a certain prevalence in the world, — I am quite aware that these rascals have their advocates, — and no bad ones either, — since they are women.

I have witnessed more than one Giuseppe, or Antonio, with a beard, whiskers, and general "get up," that would have passed muster in a comic opera; and on looking at the fellow's book of certificates (for such as these always have a bound volume, smartly enclosed in a neat case), I have found that "Mrs. Miles Dalrymple and daughters made the journey from Milan to Aix-les-Bains with Francesco Birbante, and found him excessively attentive, civil, and obliging; full of varied information about the road, and quite a treasure to ladies travelling alone." Another of these villains is styled "quite an agreeable companion;" one was called "charming;" and I found that Miss Matilda Somers, of Queen's Road, Old Brompton, pronounces Luigi Balderdasci, "although in the humble rank of a vetturino, an accomplished gentleman." I know, therefore, how ineffectual would it be for Kenny Dodd to enter the lists against such odds, and it is only under the seal of secrecy that I dare to mutter them. The widows and the fatherless form a strong category in foreign travel; dark dresses and demure looks are very vagrant in their habits, and I am not going to oppose myself single-handed to such a united force. But to you, Tom Purcell, I may tell the truth in all confidence and security. If I was in authority, I'd shave these scoundrels to-morrow. I'd not suffer a moustache, a red sash, nor a hat with a feather amongst them; and take my word for it, the panegyrics would be toned down, and we'd read much more about the horses than the drivers, and learn how many miles a day they could travel, and not how many sonnets of Petrarch the rascal could repeat.

I have lost my "John Murray." I forgot it in our retreat from Pfeffers; so that I don't remember whether he lauds these fellows or the reverse, but the chances are it is the former. It is one of the endless delusions travellers fall into, and many's the time I have had to endure a tiresome description of their delightful vetturino, that "charming Beppo, who, 'however he got them,' had a bouquet for each of us every morning at breakfast." If I ever could accomplish the writing of that book I once spoke to you about upon the Continent and foreign travels, I'd devote a whole chapter to these fellows; and more than that, Tom, I'd have an Appendix — a book of travels is nothing without an Appendix in small print — wherein I'd give a list of all these scoundrels who have been convicted as bandits, thieves, and petty larceners; of all their misdeeds against old gentlemen with palsy, and old ladies with "nerves." I'd show them up, not as heroes but highwaymen; and take my word for it, I'd be doing good service to the writers of those sharply formed little paragraphs now so enthusiastic about Giovanni, and so full of "grateful recollections" of "poor Giuseppe."

I am positively ashamed to say how many of the observations, ay, and of the printed observations of travellers, I have discovered to have their origin in this same class;

and that what the tourist jotted down as his own remark on men and manners, was the stereotyped opinion of these illiterate vagabonds. But as for books of travel, Tom, of all the humbugs of a humbugging age, there is nothing can approach them. I have heard many men TALK admirably about foreign life and customs. I have never chanced upon one who could WRITE about them. It is not only that your really smart fellows do not write; but that, to pronounce authoritatively on a people, one must have a long and intimate acquaintance with them. Now, this very fact alone to a great degree invalidates the freshness of observation; for what we are accustomed to see every day ceases to strike us as worthy of remark. To the raw tourist, all is strange, novel, and surprising; and if he only record what he sees, he will tell much that everybody knows, but also some things that are not quite so familiar to the multitude. Now, your old resident abroad knows the Continent too well and too thoroughly to find any one incident or circumstance peculiar. To take an illustration: A man who had never been at a play in his life would form a far better conception of what a theatre was like from hearing the description of one from an intelligent child, who had been there once, than from the most labored criticism on the acting from an old frequenter of the pit. Hence the majority of these tours have a certain success at home; but for the man who comes abroad, and wishes to know something that may aid to guide his steps, form his opinions, and direct his judgment, believe me they are not worth a brass farthing. There is this also to be taken into account, — that every observer is, more or less, recounting some trait of his own nature, of his habits, his tastes, and his prejudices; so that before you can receive his statement, you have to study his disposition. Take all these adverse and difficult conditions into consideration, — give a large margin for credulity, and a larger for exaggeration, — bethink you of the embarrassments of a foreign tongue, and then I ask you how much real information you have a right to expect from Journals of the Long Vacation, or Winters in Italy, or Tyrol Rambles in Autumn? I say it in no boastfulness, Tom, nor in any mood of vanity, but if I was some twenty years younger, with a good income and no encumbrances, well versed in languages, and fairly placed as regards social advantages, I myself could make a very readable volume about foreign life and foreign manners. You laugh at the notion of Kenny Dodd on a titlepage; but have n't we one or two of our acquaintances that cut just as ridiculous a figure?

Tiverton has come in to tell me that the judgment of the Court has been given against him, and consequently against us, "*in re* Vetturino;" and the award of the judge is, "That we pay all the expenses for the journey to Milan, the gratuity, — that was only to be given as an evidence of our perfect satisfaction, — and anything more that our sense of honor and justice may suggest, as compensation for the loss of time he has sustained in litigating with us." On these conditions he is to be free to follow his road, and we are to remain here till — I wish I could say the time — but, according to present appearances, it may be spring before we get away. When I tell you that the decision has been given by the landlord of the inn, where we must stop, — as no other exists within twenty miles of us, — you may guess the animus of the judgment-seat. It requires a great degree of self-restraint not be to carried into what the law calls an overt act, by a piece of iniquity like this. I have abstained by a great effort; but the struggle has almost given me a fit of apoplexy. Imagine the effrontery of the rascal, Tom: scarcely had he counted over his Napoleons, and made his grin of farewell, than he mounted his box and drove away over the mountain, which had just been declared impassable, — a feat witnessed by all of us, — in company with the landlord who had pronounced the verdict against us. I stormed — I swore — in short, I worked myself into a sharp fit of the gout, which flew from my ankle to my stomach, and very nigh carried me off. A day of extreme suffering has been succeeded by one of great depression; and here I am now, with the snow still falling fast; the last courier who went by saying "that all the inns at Chiavenna were full of people, none of whom would venture to cross the mountain." It appears that there are just two peculiarly unpropitious seasons for the passage, — when the snow falls first, and when it begins to melt in spring. It is needless to say that we have hit upon one of these, with our habitual good fortune!

Thursday. THE INN, SPLÜGEN.

Here we are still in this blessed place, this being now our seventh day in a hole you would n't condemn a dog to live in. How long we might have continued our sojourn it is hard to say, when a mere accident has afforded us the prospect of liberation. It turns out that two families arrived and went forward last night, having only halted to sup and change horses. On inquiry why we could n't be supposed capable of the same exertion, you 'll not believe me when I tell you the answer we got. No, Tom! The enormous power of lying abroad is clear and clean beyond your conception. It was this, then. We could go when we pleased, — it was entirely a caprice of our own that we had not gone before. "How so, may I ask?" said I, in the meekest of inquiring voices. "You would n't go like others," was the answer. "In what respect, — how?" asked I again. "Oh, your English notions rejected the idea of a sledge. You insisted upon going on wheels, and as no wheeled carriage could run —" Grant me patience, or I 'll explode like a shell. My hand shakes, and my temples are throbbing so that I can scarcely write the lines. I made a great effort at a calm and discretionary tone, but it would n't do; a certain fulness about the throat, a general dizziness, and a noise like the sea in my ears, told me that I 'd have been behaving basely to the "Guardian" and the "Equitable Fire and Life" were I to continue the debate. I sat down, and with a sponge and water and loose cravat, I got better. There was considerable confusion in my faculties on my coming to myself; I had a vague notion of having conducted myself in some most ridiculous and extravagant fashion, — having insisted upon the horses being harnessed in some impossible mode, or made some demand or other totally impracticable. Cary, like a dear kind girl as she is, laughed and quizzed me out of my delusion, and showed me that it was the cursed imputation of that scoundrel of a landlord had given this erratic turn to my thoughts. The gout has settled in my left foot, and I now, with the exception of an occasional shoot of pain that I relieve by a shout, feel much better, and hope soon to be fit for the road. Poor Cary made me laugh by a story she picked up somewhere of a Scotch gentleman who had contracted with his vetturino to be carried from Genoa to Rome and fed on the road, — a very common arrangement. The journey was to occupy nine days; but wishing to secure a splendid "buona mano," the vetturino drove at a tremendous pace, and actually arrived in Rome on the eighth day, having almost killed his horses and exhausted himself. When he appeared before his traveller, expecting compliments on his speed, and a handsome recognition for his zeal, guess his astonishment to hear his self-panegyrics cut short by the pithy remark: "You drove very well, my friend; but we are not going to part just yet, — you have still another day to *feed* me."

Tiverton has at length patched up an arrangement with our landlord for twelve sledges, — each only carries one and the driver, — so that if nothing adverse intervene we are to set forth to-morrow. He says that we may reasonably hope to reach Chiavenna before evening. I 'll therefore not detain this longer, but in the prospect that our hour of liberation has at length drawn nigh, conclude my long despatch.

Our villa at Como will be our next address, and I hope to find a letter there from you soon after our arrival. Remember, Tom, all that I have said about the supplies, for though they tell me Italy be cheap, I have not yet discovered a land where the population believes gold to be dross. Adieu!

LETTER VI.

MARY ANNE DODD TO MISS DOOLAN, OF BALLYDOOLAN.

On the Splügen Alps.

Dearest Kitty, — I write these few lines from the Refuge-house on the Splügen Pass. We are seven thousand feet above the level of something, with fifty feet of snow around us, and the deafening roar of avalanches thundering on the ear. We set out yesterday from the village of Splügen, contrary to the advice of the guides, but papa insisted on going. He declared that if no other means offered, he'd go on foot, so that opposition was really out of the question. Our departure was quite a picture. First came a long, low sledge, with stones and rocks to explore the way, and show where the footing was secure. Then came three others with our luggage; after that mamma, under the guidance of a most careful person, a certain Bernardt something, brother of the man who acted as guide to Napoleon; Cary followed her in another sledge, and I came third, papa bringing up the rear, for Betty and the other servants were tastefully grouped about the luggage. Several additional sledges followed with spade and shovel-folk, ropes, drags, and other implements most suggestive of peril and adventure. We were perfect frights to look at; for, in addition to fur boots and capes, tarpaulins and hoods, we had to wear snow goggles as a precaution against the fine drifting snow, so that really for very shame' sake I was glad that each sledge only held one, and the driver, who is fortunately, also, at your back.

The first few miles of ascent were really pleasurable, for the snow was hard, and the pace occasionally reached a trot, or at least such a resemblance to one as shook the conveniency, and made the bells jingle agreeably on the harness. The road, too, followed a zigzag course on the steep side of the mountain, so that you saw at moments some of those above and some beneath you, winding along exactly like the elephant procession in Bluebeard. The voices sounded cheerily in the sharp morning air, itself exhilarating to a degree, and this, with the bright snow-peaks, rising one behind the other in the distance, and the little village of Splügen in the valley, made up a scene strikingly picturesque and interesting. There was a kind of adventure, too, about it all, dearest Kitty, that never loses its charm for the soul deeply imbued with a sense of the beautiful and imaginative. I fancied myself at moments carried away by force into the Steppes of Tartary, or that I was Elizabeth crossing the Volga, and I believe I even shed tears at my fancied distress. To another than you, dearest, I might hesitate even if I confessed as much; but you, who know every weakness of a too feeling heart, will forgive me for being what I am.

My guide, a really fine-looking mountaineer, with a magnificent beard, fancied that it was the danger that had appalled me. He hastened to offer his rude but honest consolations; he protested that there was nothing whatever like peril, and that if there were — But why do I go on? even to my dearest friend may not this seem childish? and is it not a silly vanity that owns it can derive pleasure from every homage, even the very humblest?

We gradually lost sight of the little smoke-wreathed village, and reached a wild but grandly desolate region, with snow on every side. The pathway, too, was now lost to us, and the direction only indicated by long poles at great intervals. That all was not perfectly safe in front might be apprehended, for we came frequently to a dead halt, and then the guides and the shovel-men would pass rapidly to and fro, but, muffled as we were, all inquiry was impossible, so that we were left to the horrors of doubt and dread without a chance of relief. At length we grew accustomed to these interruptions, and felt in a measure tranquil. Not so the guides, however; they frequently talked together in knots, and I could see from their upward glances, too, that they apprehended some change in the weather. Papa had contrived to cut some of the cords with which they had fastened his muffles, and by great patience and exertion succeeded in getting his head out of three horsecloths, with which they had swathed him.

"Are we near the summit?" cried he, in English, — "how far are we from the top?"

His question was of course unintelligible, but his action not; and the consequence was that three of our followers rushed over to him, and after a brief struggle, in which two of them were tumbled over in the snow, his head was again enclosed within its woolly cenotaph; and, indeed, but for a violent jerking motion of it, it might have been feared that even all access to external air was denied him. This little incident was the only break to the monotony of the way, till nigh noon, when a cold, biting wind, with great masses of misty vapor, swept past and around us, and my guide told me that we were somewhere, with a hard name, and that he wished we were somewhere else, with a harder.

I asked why, but my question died away in the folds of my head-gear, and I was left to my own thoughts, when suddenly a loud shout rang through the air. It was a party about to turn back, and the sledges stopped up the road. The halt led to a consultation between the guides, which I could see turned on the question of the weather. The discussion was evidently a warm one, a party being for, and another against it. Hearing what they said was of course out of the question, muffled as I was; but their gestures clearly defined who were in favor of proceeding, and who wished to retrace their steps. One of the former particularly struck me; for, though encumbered with fur boots and an enormous mantle, his action plainly indicated that he was something out of the common. He showed that air of command, too, Kitty, that at once proclaims superiority. His arguments prevailed, and after a considerable time spent, on we went again. I followed the interesting stranger till he was lost to me; but guess my feelings, Kitty, when I heard a voice whisper in my ear, "Don't be afraid, dearest, I watch over *your* safety." Oh! fancy the perturbation of my poor heart, for it was Lord George who spoke. He it was whose urgent persuasions had determined the guides to proceed, and he now had taken the place behind my own sledge, and actually drove instead of the postilion. Can you picture to yourself heroism and devotion like this? And while I imagined that he was borne along with all the appliances of ease and comfort, the poor dear fellow was braving the storm *for me*, and *for me* enduring the perils of the raging tempest.

From that instant, my beloved Kitty, I took little note of the dangers around me. I thought but of him who stood so near to me, — so near, and yet so far off; so close, and yet so severed! I bethought me, too, how unjust the prejudice of the vulgar mind that attributes to our youthful nobility habits of selfish indolence and effeminate ease. Here was one reared in all the voluptuous enjoyment of a splendid household, trained from his cradle to be waited on and served, and yet was he there wilfully encountering perils and hardships from which the very bravest might recoil. Ah, Kitty! it is impossible to deny it, — the highly born have a native superiority in everything. Their nobility is not a thing of crosses and ribbons, but of blood. They feel that they are of earth's purest clay, and they assert the claim to pre-eminence by their own proud and lofty gifts. I told you, too, that he said "dearest." I might have been deceived; the noise was deafening at the moment; but I feel as if my ears could not have betrayed me. At all events, Kitty, his hand sought mine while he spoke, and though in his confusion it was my elbow he caught, he pressed it tenderly. In what a delicious dream did I revel as we slid along over the snow! What cared I for the swooping wind, the thundering avalanche, the drifting snow-wreath, — was he not there, my protector and my guide? Had he not sworn to be my succor and my safety? We had just arrived at a lofty tableland, — some few peaks appeared still above us, but none very near, — when the wind, with a violence beyond all description, bore great masses of drift against us, and effectually barred all farther progress. The stone sledge, too, had partly become embedded in the soft snow, and the horse was standing powerless, when suddenly mamma's horse stumbled and fell. In his efforts to rise he smashed one of the rope traces, so that when he began to pull again, the unequal draught carried the sledge to one side, and upset it. A loud shriek told me something had happened, and at the instant Lord G. whispered in my ear, "It's nothing, — she has only taken a 'header' in the soft snow, and won't be a bit the worse."

Further questioning was vain; for Cary's sledge-horse shied at the confusion in front, and plunged off the road into the deep snow, where he disappeared all but the head, fortunately flinging her out into the guide's arms. My turn was now to come; for Lord G., with his mad impetuosity, tried to pass on and gain the front, but the animal, by a furious jerk, smashed all the tackle, and set off at a wild, half-swimming pace through the snow, leaving our sledge firmly wedged between two dense walls of drift. Papa sprang out to our rescue; but so helpless was he, from the quantity of his integuments, that he rolled over, and lay there on his back, shouting fearfully.

It appeared as if the violence of the storm had only waited for this moment of general disaster; for now the wind tore along great masses of snow, that rose around us to the height of several feet, covering up the horses to their backs, and embedding the men to their armpits. Loud booming masses announced the fall of avalanches near, and the sky became darkened, like as if night was approaching. Words cannot convey the faintest conception of that scene of terror, dismay, and confusion. Guides shouting and swearing; cries of distress and screams of anguish mingled with the rattling thunder and the whistling wind. Some were for trying to go back; others proclaimed it impossible; each instant a new disaster occurred. The baggage had disappeared altogether, Betty Cobb being saved, as it sank, by almost superhuman efforts of the guide. Paddy Byrne, who had mistaken the kick of a horse on the back of his head for a blow, had pitched into one of the guides, and they were now fighting in four feet of snow, and likely to carry their quarrel out of the world with them. Taddy was "nowhere." To add to this uproar, papa had, in mistake for brandy, drunk two-thirds of a bottle of complexion wash, and screamed out that he was poisoned. Of mamma I could see nothing; but a dense group surrounded her sledge, and showed me she was in trouble.

I could not give you an idea of what followed, for incidents of peril were every moment interrupted by something ludicrous. The very efforts we made to disengage ourselves were constantly attended by some absurd catastrophe, and no one could stir a step without either a fall, or a plunge up to the waist in soft snow. The horses, too, would make no efforts to rise, but lay to be snowed over as if perfectly indifferent to their fate. By good fortune our britschka, from which the wheels had been taken off, was in a sledge to the rear, and mamma, Cary, and myself were crammed into this, to which all the horses, and men also, were speedily harnessed, and by astonishing efforts we were enabled to get on. Papa and Betty were wedged fast into one sledge, and attached to us by a tow-rope, and thus we at length proceeded.

When mamma found herself in comparative safety, she went off into a slight attack of her nerves; but, fortunately, Lord G. found out the bottle papa had been in vain in search of, and she got soon better. Poor fellow, no persuasion could prevail on him to come inside along with us. How he travelled, or how he contrived to brave that fearful day, I never learned! From this moment our journey was at the rate of about a mile in three hours, the shovel and spade men having to clear the way as we went; and what between horses that had to be dug out of holes, harness repaired, men rescued, and frequent accident to papa's sledge, which, on an average, was upset every half-hour, our halts were incessant. It was after midnight that we reached a dreary-looking stone edifice in the midst of the snow. Anything so dismal I never beheld, as it stood there surrounded with drift-snow, its narrow windows strongly barred with iron, and its roof covered with heavy masses of stone to prevent it being carried away by the hurricane. This, we were told, was the Refuge-house on the summit, and here, we were informed, we should stay till a change of weather might enable us to proceed.

But does not the very name "Refuge-house" fill you with thoughts of appalling danger? Do you not instinctively shudder at the perils to which this is the haven of succor?

"I see we are not the first here," cried Caroline; "don't you see lights moving yonder?"

She was right, for as we drew up we perceived a group of guides and drivers in the doorway, and saw various conveyances and sledges within the shed at the side of the building.

A dialogue in the wildest shouts was now conducted between our party and the others, by which we came to learn that the travellers were some of those who had left Splügen the night before ourselves, and whose disasters had been even worse than our own. Indeed, as far as I could ascertain, they had gone through much more than we had.

Our first meeting with papa — in the kitchen, as I suppose I must call the lower room of this fearful place — was quite affecting, for he had taken so much of the guide's brandy as an antidote to the supposed poison, that he was really overcome, and, under the delusion that he was at home in his own house, ran about shaking hands with every one, and welcoming them to Dodsborough. Mamma was so convinced that he had lost his reason permanently, that she was taken with violent hysterics. The scene baffles all description, occurring, as it did, in presence of some twenty guides and spade-folk, who drank their "schnaps," ate their sausages, smoked, and dried their wet garments all the while, with a most well-bred inattention to our sufferings. Though Cary and I were obliged to do everything ourselves, — for Betty was insensible, owing to her having travelled in the vicinity of the same little cordial flask, and my maid was sulky in not being put under the care of a certain good-looking guide, — we really succeeded wonderfully, and contrived to have papa put to bed in a little chamber with a good mattress, and where a cheerful fire was soon lighted. Mamma also rallied, and Lord George made her a cup of tea in a kettle, and poured her out a cup of it into the shaving-dish of his dressing-box, and we all became as happy as possible.

It appeared that the other arrivals, who occupied a separate quarter, were not ill provided for the emergency, for a servant used to pass and repass to their chamber with a very savory odor from the dish he carried, and Lord G. swore that he heard the pop of a champagne cork. We made great efforts to ascertain who they were, but without success. All we could learn was that it was a gentleman and a lady, with their two servants, travelling in their own carriage, which was unmistakably English.

"I 'm determined to run them to earth," exclaimed Lord G. at last. "I 'll just mistake my way, and blunder into their apartment."

We endeavored to dissuade him, but he was determined; and when he is so, Kitty, nothing can swerve him. Off he went, and after a pause of a few seconds we heard a heavy door slammed, then another. After that, both Cary and myself were fully persuaded that we heard a hearty burst of laughter; but though we listened long and painfully, we could detect no more. Unhappily, too, at this time mamma fell asleep, and her deep respirations effectually masked everything but the din of the avalanches. After a while Cary followed ma's example, leaving me alone to sit by the "watch-fire's light," and here, in the regions of eternal snow, to commune with her who holds my heart's dearest affections.

It is now nigh three o'clock. The night is of the very blackest, neither moon nor stars to be seen; fearful squalls of wind — gusts strong enough to shake this stronghold to its foundation — tear wildly past, and from the distance comes the booming sound of thundering avalanches. One might fancy, easily, that escape from this was impossible, and that to be cast away here implied a lingering but inevitable fate. No great strain of fancy is needed for such a consummation. We are miles from all human habitation, and three yards beyond the doorway the boldest would not dare to venture! And you, Kitty, at this hour are calmly sleeping to the hum of "the spreading sycamore;" or, perchance, awake, and thinking of her who now pours out her heart before you; and oh, blame me not if it be a tangled web that I present to you, for such will human hopes and emotions ever make it. My poor heart is, indeed, a battle-ground for warring hopes and fears, high-soaring ambitions, and depressing terrors. Would that you were here to guide, console, and direct me!

Lord George has not returned. What can his absence mean? All is silent, too, in the dreary building. My anxieties are fearful, — I dread I know not what. I fancy a thousand ills that even possibility would have rejected. The courier is to pass this at five o'clock, so that I must, perchance, close my letter in the same agony of doubt and uncertainty.

Oh, dearest, only fancy the *mal à propos*. Who do you think our neighbors are? Mr. and Mrs. Gore Hampton, on their way to Italy! Can you imagine anything so unfortunate and so distressing? You may remember all our former intimacy, — I may call it friendship, — and by what an unpropitious incident it was broken up. Lord George has just come to tell me the tidings, but, instead of participating in my distress, he seems to think the affair an admirable joke. I need not tell you that he knows nothing of mamma's temper, nor her manner of acting. What may come of this there is no saying. It seems that there is scarcely a chance of our being able to get on to-day; and here we are all beneath one roof, our mutual passions of jealousy, hatred, revenge, and malice, all snowed up on the top of the Splügen Alps!

I have asked of Lord George, almost with tears, what is to be done? but to all seeming he sees no difficulty in the matter, for his reply is always, "Nothing whatever." When pressed closely, he says, "Oh, the Gore Hamptons are such thoroughly well-bred folk, there is never any awkwardness to be apprehended from *them*. Be quite easy in your mind; *they* have tact enough for any emergency." What this may mean, Kitty, I cannot even guess; for the "situation," as the French would call it, is peculiar. And as to tact, it is, after all, like skill in a game which, however available against a clever adversary, is of little value when opposed to those who neither recognize the rules, nor appreciate the nice points of the encounter.

But I cannot venture to inquire further; it would at once convict me of ignorance, so that I appear to be satisfied with an explanation that explains nothing. And now, Kitty, to conclude; for, though dying to tell you that this knotty question has been fairly solved, I must seal my letter and despatch it by Lord George, who is this moment about to set out for the Toll-house, three miles away. It appears that two of our guides have refused to go farther, and that we must have recourse to the authorities to compel them. This is the object of Lord George's mission; but the dear fellow braves every hardship and every peril for us, and says that he would willingly encounter far more hazardous dangers for one "kind word, or one kind look," from your distracted, but ever devoted

MARY ANNE.

They begin to fear now that some accident must have befallen the courier with the mails; he should have passed through here at midnight. It is now daybreak, and no sign of him! Our anxieties are terrible, and what fate may yet be ours there is no knowing.

LETTER VII.

MRS. DODD TO MRS. MARY GALLAGHER, PRIEST'S HOUSE, BRUFF.

COLICO, ITALY.

MY DEAR MOLLY, — After fatigues and distresses that would have worn out the strength of a rhinocerass, here we are, at length, in Italy. If you only saw the places we came through, the mountains upon mountains of snow, the great masses that tumbled down on every side of us, and we lost, as one might call it, in the very midst of eternal dissolution, you 'd naturally exclaim that you had got the last lines ever to be traced by your friend Jemima. Two days of this, no less, my dear, with fifteen degrees below "Nero," wherever he is, that 's what I call suffering and misery. We were twice given up for lost, and but for Providence and a guide called — I am afraid to write it, but it answers to Barny with us — we 'd have soon gone to our long account; and, oh, Molly! what a reckoning will that be for K. I.! If ever there was a heart jet black with iniquity and baseness, it is his; and he knows it; and he knows I knows it; and more than that, the whole world shall know it. I 'll publish him through what the poet calls the "infamy of space;" and, so long as I 'm spared, I 'll be a sting in his flesh, and a thorn in his side.

I can't go over our journey — the very thought of it goes far with me — but if you can imagine three females along with the Arctic voyagers, you may form some vague idea of our perils. Bitter winds, piercing snow-drift, pelting showers of powdered ice, starvation, and danger, — dreadful danger, — them was the enjoyments that cost us something over eighteen pounds! Why? — you naturally say, — why? And well may you ask, Mrs. Gallagher. It is nothing remarkable in your saying that this is singular and almost unintelligible. The answer, however, is easy, and the thing itself no mystery. It 's as old as Adam, my dear, and will last as long as his family. The natural baseness and depravity of the human heart! Oh, Molly, what a subject that is! I 'm never weary thinking of it; and, strange to say, the more you reflect the more difficult does it become. Father Shea had an elegant remark that I often think over: "Our bad qualities," says he, "are like noxious reptiles. There 's no good trying to destroy them, for they 're too numerous; nor to reclaim them, for they 're too savage; the best thing is to get out of their way." There 's a deal of fine philosophy in the observation, Molly; and if, instead of irritating and vexing and worrying our infirmities, we just treated them the way we should a shark or a rattlesnake, depend upon it we 'd preserve our unanimity undisturbed, and be happier as well as better. Maybe you 'll ask why I don't try this plan with K. I.? But I did, Molly. I did so for fifteen years. I went on never minding his perfidious behavior; I winked at his frailties, and shut my eyes, as you know yourself, to Shusy Connor; but my leniency only made him bolder in wickedness, till at last we came to that elegant business, last summer, in Germany, that got into all the newspapers, and made us the talk of the whole world.

I thought the lesson he got at that time taught him something. I fondly dreamed that the shame and disgrace would be of service to him; at all events, that it would take the conceit out of him. Vain hopes, Molly dear, — vain and foolish hopes! He is n't a bit better; the bad dross is in him; and my silent tears does no more good than my gentle remonstrances.

It was only the other day we went to see a place called Pfeffers, a dirty, dismal hole as ever you looked at. I thought we were going to see a beautiful something like Ems or Baden, with a band and a pump-room, and fine company, and the rest of it. Nothing of the kind, — but a gloomy old building in a cleft between two mountains, that looked as if they were going to swallow it up. The people, too, were just fit for the place, — a miserable set of sickly creatures in flannel dresses, either sitting up to their necks in water, or drying themselves on the rocks. To any one else the scene would be full of serious reflections about the uncertainty of human life, and the certainty of what was to come after it. Them was n't K. I.'s sentiments, my dear, for he begins at once what naval men call "exchanging signals" with one of the patients. "This is the Bad-house, my dear," says he. "I think so, Mr. D.," said I, with a look that made him tremble. He had just ordered dinner, but I did n't care for that; I told them to bring out the horses at once. "Come, girls," said I, "this is no place for you; your father's proceedings are neither very edifying nor exemplary."

"What 's the matter now?" says he. "Where are we going before dinner?"

"Out of this, Mr. Dodd," said I. "Out of this at any rate."

"Where to, — what for?" cried he.

"I think you might guess," said I, with a sneer; "but if not, perhaps that hussy with the spotted gingham could aid you to the explanation."

He was so overwhelmed at my discovering this, Molly, that he was speechless; not a word,— not a syllable could he utter. He sat down on a stone, and wiped his head with a handkerchief.

"Don't make me ill, Mrs. D.," said he, at last. "I 've a notion that the gout is threatening me."

"If that 's all, K. I.," said I, "it 's well for you, — it 's well if it is not worse than the gout. Ay, get red in the face, — be as passionate as you please, but you shall hear the truth from *me*, at least; I may n't be long here to tell it. Sufferings such as I 've gone through will do their work at last; but I 'll fulfil my duty to my family till I 'm released — " With that I gave it to him, till we arrived at Coire, eighteen miles, and a good part of it up hill, and you may think what that was. At all events, Molly, he did n't come off with flying colors, for when we reached a place called Splügen he was seized with the gout in earnest. I only wish you saw the hole he pitched upon to be laid up in; but it 's like everything else the man does. Every trait of his character shows that he has n't a thought, nor a notion, but about his own comforts and his own enjoyments. And I told him so. I said to him, "Don't think that your self-indulgence and indolence go down with *me* for easiness of temper: that's an imposture may do very well for the *world*, but your wife can't be taken in by it." In a word, Molly, I did n't spare him; and as his attack was a sharp one, I think it's likely he does n't look back to the Splügen with any very grateful reminiscences.

Little I thought, all the time, what good cause I had for my complaints, nor what was in store for me in the very middle of the snow! You must know that we had to take the wheels off the carriage and put it on something like a pair of big skates, for the snow was mountains high, and as soft as an egg-pudding. You may think what floundering we had through it for twelve hours, sometimes sinking up to the chin, now swimming, now digging, and now again being dragged out of it by ropes, till we came to what they call the "Refuge-house;" a pretty refuge, indeed, with no door, and scarcely a window, and everybody — guides, postboys, diggers, and travellers — all hickledy-pickledy inside! There we were, my dear, without a bed, or even a mattress, and nothing to eat but a bottle of Sir Robert Peel's sauce, that K. I. had in his trunk, with a case of eau-de-Cologne to wash it down. Fortunately for me my feelings got the better of me, and I sobbed and screeched myself to rest. When I awoke in the morning, I heard from Mary Anne that another family, and English too, were in the refuge with us, and, to all appearance, not ill-supplied with the necessaries of life. This much I perceived myself, for the courier lit a big fire on the hearth, and laid a little table beside it, as neat and comfortable as could be. After that he brought out a coffee-pot and boiled the coffee, and made a plate of toast, and fried a dish of ham-rashers and eggs. The very fizzing of them on the fire, Molly, nearly overcame me! But that was n't all; but he put down on the table a case of sardines and a glass bowl of beautiful honey, just as if he wanted to make my suffering unbearable. It was all I could do to stand it. At last, when he had everything ready, he went to a door at the end of the room and knocked. Something was said inside that I did n't catch, but he answered quickly, "Oui, Madame," and a minute after out they walked. Oh, Molly, there 's not words in the language to express even half of my feelings at that moment. Indeed, for a minute or two I would n't credit my senses, but thought it was an optical confusion. In she flounced, my dear, just as if she was walking into the Court of St. James's, with one arm within his, and the other hand gracefully holding up her dress, and *he*, with a glass stuck in his eye, gave us a look as he passed just as if we were the people of the place.

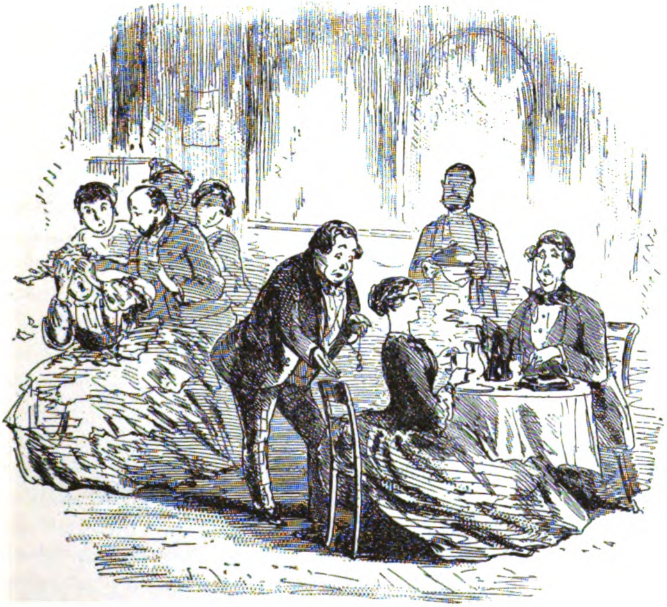
Down they sat in all state, smiling at each other, and settling their napkins as coolly as if they were at the Clarendon. "Will you try a rasher, my dear?" "Thanks, love; I 'll trouble you." It was "love" and "dear" every word with them; and such looks as passed, Molly, I am ashamed even to think of it! Heaven knows I never looked that way at K. I. There I sat watching them; for worlds I could n't take my eyes away; and though Mary Anne whispered and implored, and even tried to force me, I was chained to the spot. To be sure, it 's little they minded me! They talked away about Lady Sarah This and Sir Joseph That; wondered if the Marquis had gone down to Scotland, and whether the Duchess would meet them at Milan. As I told you before, Molly, I was n't quite sure my eyes did n't betray me, and while I was thus struggling with my doubts, in came K. I. "I was over the whole place, Jemi," said he, "and there 's not a scrap of victuals to be had for love or money. They say, however, that there 's an English family — " When he got that far, he stopped short, for his eyes just fell on the pair at breakfast.

"May I never, Mrs. D.," said he, "but that 's our friend Mrs. G. H. As sure as I 'm here, that 's herself and no other."

"And of course quite a surprise to *you*," said I, with a look, Molly, that went through him.

"Faith, I suppose so," said he, trying to laugh. "I was n't exactly thinking of her at this moment. At all events, the meeting is fortunate; for one might die of hunger here."

I need n't tell you, Molly, that I 'd rather endure the trials of Tartary than I'd touch a morsel belonging to her; but before I could say so, up he goes to the table, bowing, and smiling, and smirking in a way that I'm sure he thought quite irresistible. She, however, never looked up from her teacup, but her companion stuck his glass in his eye, and stared impudently without speaking.



"If I'm not greatly mistaken," said K. I., "I have the honor and the happiness to see before me—"

"Mistake,—quite a mistake, my good man. Au! au!" said the other, cutting him short. "Never saw you before in my life!"

"Nor are *you*, sir, the object of my recognition. It is this lady,—Mrs. Gore Hampton."

She lifted her head at this, and stared at K. I. as coldly as if he was a wax image in a hairdresser's window.

"Don't you remember me, ma'am?" says he, in a soft voice; "or must I tell you my name?"

"I'm afraid even that, sir, would not suffice," said she, with a most insulting smile of compassion.

"Ain't you Mrs. Gore Hampton, ma'am?" asked he, trembling all over between passion and astonishment.

"Pray, do send him away, Augustus," said she, sipping her tea.

"Don't you perceive, sir — eh, au — don't you see — that it's a au — au, eh — a misconception — a kind of a demned blunder?"

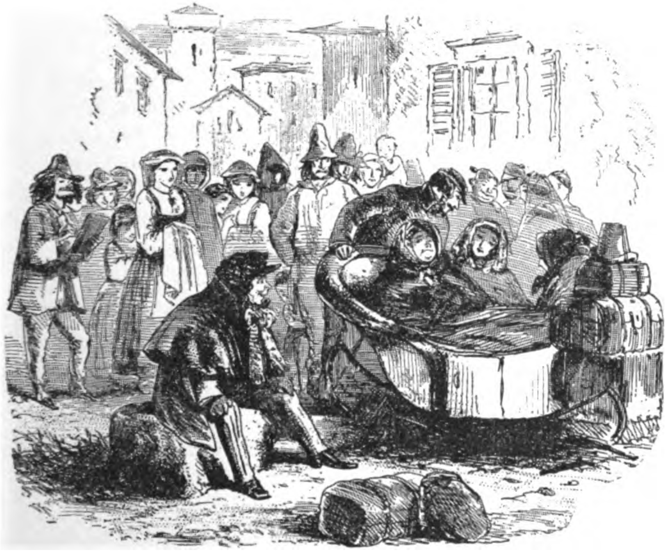
"I tell you what I see, sir," said K. I, — "I see a lady that travelled day and night in my company, and with no other companion too, for two hundred and seventy miles; that lived in the same hotel, dined at the same table, and, what's more — "

But I could n't bear it any longer, Molly. Human nature is not strong enough for trials like this, — to hear him boasting before my face of his base behavior, and to see her sitting coolly by listening to it. I gave a screech that made the house ring, and went off in the strongest fit of screaming ever I took in my life. I tore my cap to tatters, and pulled down my hair, — and, indeed, if what they say be true, my sufferings must have been dreadful; for I did n't leave a bit of whisker on one of the guides, and held another by the cheek till he was nigh insensible. I was four hours coming to myself; but many of the others were n't in a much better state when it was all over. The girls were completely overcome, and K. I. taken with spasms, that drew him up like a football. Meanwhile *she* and her friend were off; never till the last minute as much as saying one word to any of us, but going away, as I may say, with colors flying, and all the "horrors of war."

Oh, Molly, was n't that more than mere human fragility is required to bear, not to speak of the starvation and misery in my weak state? Black bread and onions, that was our dinner, washed down with the sourest vinegar, called wine forsooth, I ever tasted. And that's the way we crossed the Alps, my dear, and them the pleasures that accompanied us into the beautiful South.

If I wanted a proof of K. I.'s misconduct, Molly, was n't this scene decisive? Where would be the motive of her behavior, if it was n't conscious guilt? That was the ground I took in discussing the subject as we came along; and a more lamentable spectacle of confounded iniquity than he exhibited I never beheld. To be sure, I did n't spare him much, and jibed him on the ingratitude his devotion met with, till he grew nearly purple with passion.

"Mrs. D.," said he, at last, "when we lived at home, in Ireland, we had our quarrels like other people, about the expense of the house, and waste in the kitchen, the time the horses was kept out under the rain, and such-like, — but it never occurred to you to fancy me a gay Lutherian. What the —— has put that in your head now? Is it coming abroad? for, if so, that's another grudge I owe this infernal excursion!"



"You've just guessed it, Mr. Dodd, then," said I. "When you were at home in your own place, you were content, like the other old fools of your own time of life, with a knowing glance of the eye, a sly look, and maybe a passing word or two, to a pretty girl; but no sooner did you put foot on foreign ground than you fancied yourself a lady-killer! You never saw how absurd you were, though I was telling it to you day and night. You would n't believe how the whole world was laughing at you, though I said so to the girls."

I improved on this theme till we came at nightfall to the foot of the Alps, and by that time — take my word for it, Mrs. Gallagher — there was n't much more to be said on the subject.

New troubles awaited us here, Molly. I wonder will they ever end? You may remember that I told you how the wheels was taken off our carriage to put it on a sledge on account of the snow. Well, my dear, what do you think the creatures did, but they sent our wheels over the Great St. Bernardt, — I think they call it, — and when we arrived here we found ourselves on the hard road without any wheels to the coach, but sitting with the axles in the mud! I only ask you where 's the temper can stand that? And worse, too, for K. I. sat down on a stone to look at us, and laughed till the tears run down his wicked old cheeks and made him look downright horrid.

" May I never! " said he, " but I 'd come the whole way from Ireland for one hearty laugh like this! It 's the only thing I 've yet met that requites me for coming! If I live fifty years, I 'll never forget it."

I perceive that I have n't space for the reply I made him, so that I must leave you to fill it up for yourself, and believe me your

Ever attached and suffering

JEMIMA DODD.

LETTER VIII.

JAMES DODD TO LORD GEORGE TIVERTON, M. P., POSTE RESTANTE, BREGENZ.

HOTEL OF ALL NATIONS, BATHS OF HOMBURG.

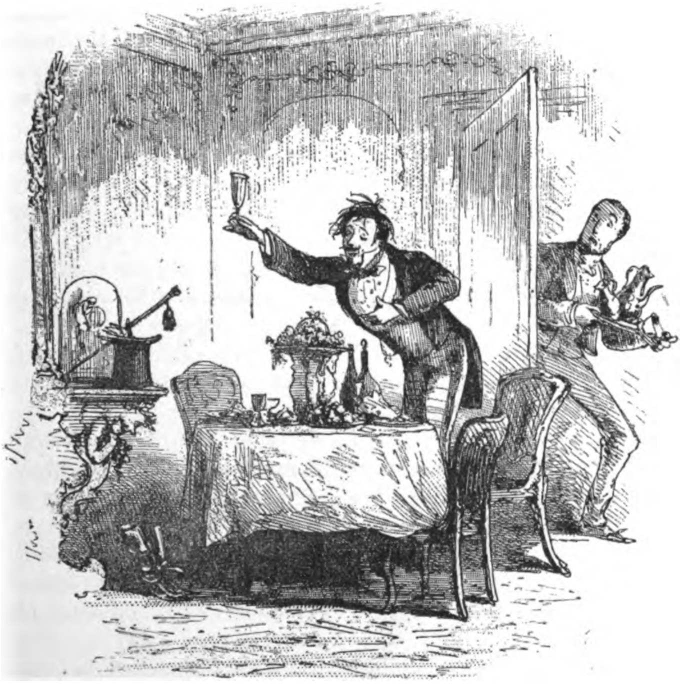
MY DEAR TIVERTON, — You often said I was a fellow to make a spoon or spoil a — something which I have forgotten — and I begin to fancy that you were a better prophet than that fellow in "Bell's Life" who always predicts the horse that does *not* win the Oaks. When we parted a few days ago, my mind was resolutely bent on becoming another Metternich or Palmerston. I imagined a whole life of brilliant diplomatic successes, and thought of myself receiving the freedom of the City of London, dining with the Queen, and making "very pretty running" for the peerage. What will you say, then, when I tell you that I despise the highest honors of the entire career, and would n't take the seals of the Foreign Office, if pressed on my acceptance this minute?

To save myself from even the momentary accusation of madness, I 'll give you — and in as few words as I can — my explanation. As I have just said, I set out with my head full of Ambassadorial ambitions, and jogged along towards England, scarcely noticing the road or speaking to my fellow-travellers. On arriving at Frankfort, however, I saw nothing on all sides of me but announcements and advertisements of the baths of Homburg, — "The last week of the season, and the most brilliant of all." Gorgeous descriptions of the voluptuous delights of the place — lists of distinguished visitors, and spicy bits of scandal — alternated with anecdotes of those who had "broke the bank," and were buying up all the chateaux and parks in the neighborhood. I tried to laugh at these pictorial puffs; I did my best to treat them as mere humbugs; but it would n't do. I went to bed so full of them that I dreamed all night of the play-table, and fancied myself once again the terror of croupiers, and the admired of the fashionable circle in the *salon*. To crown all, a waiter called me to say that the carriage I had ordered for the baths was at the door. I attempted to undeceive him; but even there my effort was a failure; and, convinced that there was a fate in the matter, I jumped out of bed, dressed, and set off, firmly impressed with the notion that I was not a free agent, but actually impelled and driven by destiny to go and win my millions at Homburg.

Perhaps my ardor was somewhat cooled down by the aspect of the place. It has few of the advantages nature has so lavishly bestowed on Baden, and which really impart to that delightful resort a charm that totally disarms you of all distrust, and make you forget that you are in a land of "legs" and swindlers, and that every second man you meet is a rogue or a runaway. Now, Homburg does not, as the French say, "impose" in this way. You see at once that it is a "Hell," and that the only amusement is to ruin or to be ruined.

"No matter," thought I; "I have already graduated at the green table; I have taken my degree in arts at Baden, and am no young hand fresh from Oxford and new to the Continent; I'll just go down and try my luck — as a fisherman whips a stream. If they rise to my fly, — well; if not, pack up the traps, and try some other water." You know that my capital was not a strong one, — about a hundred and thirty in cash, and a bill on Drummond for a hundred more, — and with this, the governor had "cleared me out" for at least six months to come. I was therefore obliged to "come it small;" and merely dabbled away with a few "Naps.," which, by dint of extraordinary patience and intense application, I succeeded in accumulating to the gross total of sixty. As I foresaw that I could n't loiter above a day longer, I went down in the evening to experimentalize on this fund, and, after a few hours, rose a winner of thirty-two thousand odd hundred francs. The following morning, I more than doubled this; and in the evening, won a trifle of twenty thousand francs; when, seeing the game take a capricious turn, I left off, and went to supper.

I was an utter stranger in the place, had not even a passing acquaintance with any one; so that, although dying for a little companionship, I had nothing for it but to order my roast partridge in my own apartment, and hobnob with myself. It is true, I was in capital spirits, — I had made glorious running, and no mistake, — and I drank my health, and returned thanks for the toast with an eloquence that really astonished me. Egad, I think the waiter must have thought me mad, as he heard me hip, hipping with "one cheer more," to the sentiment.



I suppose I must have felt called on to sing; for sing I did, and, I am afraid, with far more zeal than musical talent;

for I overheard a tittering of voices outside my door, and could plainly perceive that the household had assembled as audience. What cared I for this? The world had gone too well with me of late to make me thin-skinned or peevishly disposed. I could afford to be forgiving and generous: and I revelled in the very thought that I was soaring in an atmosphere to which trifling and petty annoyances never ascended. In this enviable frame of mind was I, when a waiter presented himself with a most obsequious bow, and, in a voice of submissive civility, implored me to moderate my musical transports, since the lady who occupied the adjoining apartment was suffering terribly from headache.

"Certainly, of course," was my reply at once; and as he was leaving the room, — just by way of having something to say, — I asked, "Is she young, waiter?"

"Young and beautiful, sir."

"An angel, eh?"

"Quite handsome enough to be one, sir, I'm certain."

"And her name?"

"The Countess de St. Auber, widow of the celebrated Count de St. Auber, of whom Monsieur must have read in the newspapers."

But Monsieur had not read of him, and was therefore obliged to ask further information; whence it appeared that the Count had accidentally shot himself on the morning of his marriage, when drawing the charge of his pistols, preparatory to putting them in his carriage. The waiter grew quite pathetic in his description of the young bride's agonies, and had to wipe his eyes once or twice during his narrative.

"But she has rallied by this, has n't she?" asked I.

"If Monsieur can call it so," said he, shrugging his shoulders. "She never goes into the world,— knows no one, — receives no one, — lives entirely to herself; and, except her daily ride in the wood, appears to take no pleasure whatever in life."

"And so she rides out every day?"

"Every day, and at the same hour too. The carriage takes her about a league into the forest, far beyond where the usual promenade extends, and there her horses meet her, and she rides till dusk. Often it is even night ere she returns."

There was something that interested me deeply in all this. You know that a pretty woman on horseback is one of my greatest weaknesses; and so I went on weaving thoughts and fancies about the charming young widow till the champagne was finished, after which I went off to bed, intending to dream of her, but, to my intense disgust, to sleep like a sea-calf till morning.

My first care on waking, however, was to despatch a very humble apology by the waiter for my noisy conduct on the previous evening, and a very sincere hope that the Countess had not suffered on account of it.

He brought me back for answer "that the Countess thanked me for my polite inquiry, and was completely restored."

"Able to ride out as usual?"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you know that?"

"She has just given orders for the carriage, sir."

"I say, waiter, what kind of a hack can be got here? Or, stay, is there such a thing as a good-looking saddle-horse to be sold in the place?"

"There are two at Lagrange's stables, sir, this moment. Prince Guiciatelli has left them and his groom to pay about thirty thousand francs he owes here."

In less than a quarter of an hour I was dressed and at the stables. The nags were a neat pair; the groom, an English fellow, had just brought them over. He had bought them at Anderson's, and paid close upon three hundred for the two. It was evident that they were "too much," as horses, for the Prince, for he had never backed either of them. Before I left I had bought them both for six thousand francs, and taken "Bob" himself, a very pretty specimen of the short-legged, red-whiskered tribe, into my service.

This was on the very morning, mark, when I should have presented myself before the dons of Downing Street, and been admitted a something into her Majesty's service!

"I wish they may catch me at red-tapery!" thought I, as

I shortened my stirrups, and sat down firmly in the saddle. "I'm much more at home here than perched on an office-stool in that pleasant den they call the 'Nursery' at the Foreign Office."

Guided by a groom, with a led horse beside him, I took the road to the forest, and soon afterwards passed a dark-green barouche, with a lady in it, closely veiled, and evidently avoiding observation. The wood is intersected by alleys, so that I found it easy, while diverging from the carriage-road, to keep the equipage within view, and after about half an hour's sharp canter, I saw the carriage stop, and the Countess descend from it.

Even *you* admit that I am a sharp critic about all that pertains to riding-gear; and that as to a woman's hat, collar, gloves, habit, and whip, I am a first-rate opinion. Now, in the present instance, everything was perfect. There was a dash of "costume" in the long drooping feather and the snow-white gauntlets; but then all was strictly toned down to extreme simplicity and quiet elegance. I had just time to notice this much, and catch a glimpse of such a pair of black eyes! when she was in the saddle at once. I only want to see a woman gather up her reins in her hand, shake her habit back with a careless toss of her foot, and square herself well in the saddle, to say, "That's a horsewoman!" Egad, George, her every gesture and movement were admirable, and the graceful bend forwards with which she struck out into a canter was actually captivating. I stood watching her till she disappeared in the wood, perfectly entranced. I own to you I could not understand a Frenchwoman sitting her horse in this fashion. I had always believed the accomplishment to be more or less English, and I felt ashamed at the narrow prejudice into which I had fallen.

"What an unlucky fellow that same Count must have been!" thought I; and with this reflection I spurred my nag into a sharp pace, hoping that fast motion might enable me to turn my thoughts into some other channel. It was to no use. Go how I would, or where I would, I could think of nothing but the pretty widow,—whither she might be travelling,—where she intended to stop,—whether alone, or with others of her family,— her probable age, — her fortune? — all would rise up before me, to trouble my curiosity or awaken my interest.

I was deep in my speculations, when suddenly a horse bounded past me by a cross path. I had barely time to see the flutter of a habit, when it was lost to view. I waited to see her groom follow, but he did not appear. I listened, but no sound of a horse could be heard approaching. Had her horse run away? Had her servant lost trace of her? were questions that immediately occurred to me; but there was nothing to suggest the answer or dispel the doubt. I could bear my anxiety no longer, and away I dashed after her. It was not till after a quarter of an hour that I came in sight of her, and then she was skimming along over the even turf at a very slapping pace, which, however, I quickly perceived was no run-away gallop.

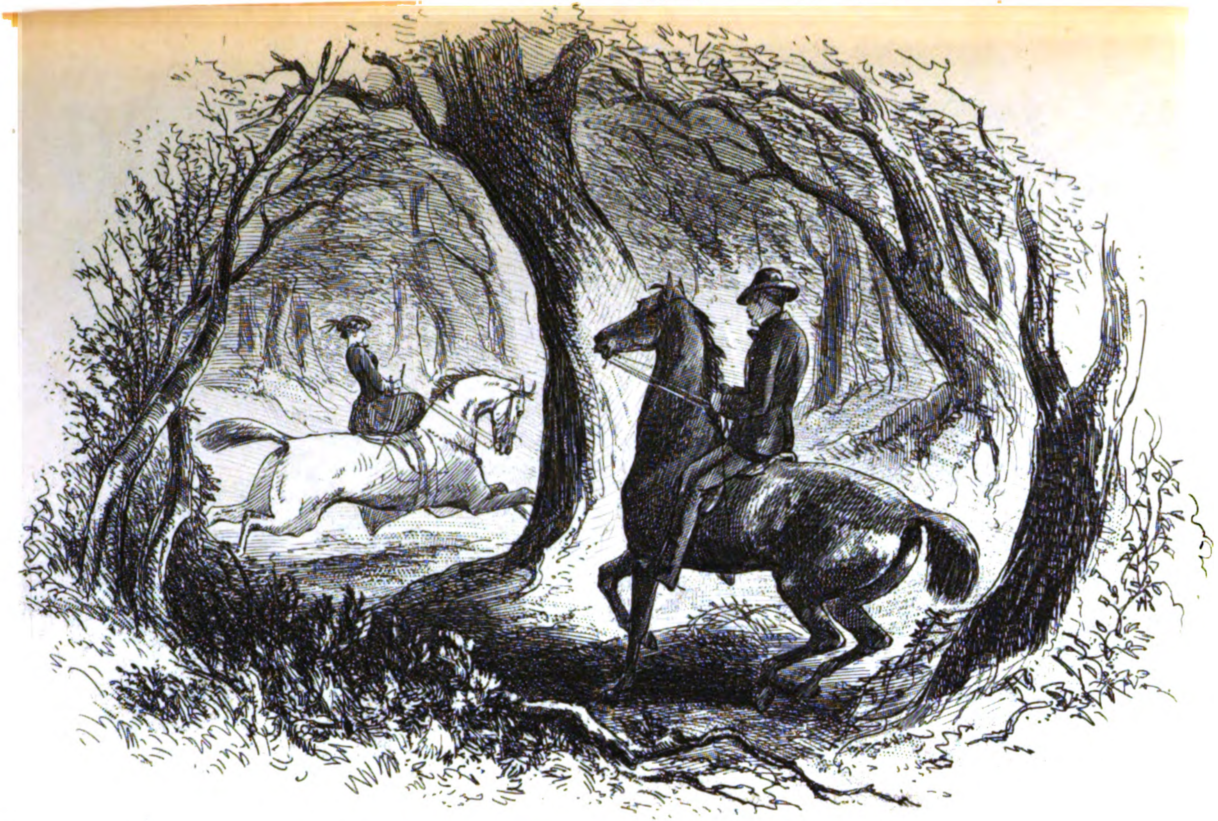
This fact proclaimed itself in a most unmistakable manner, for she suddenly drew up, and wheeled about, pointing at the same time to the ground, where her whip had just fallen. I dashed up and dismounted, when, in a voice tremulous with agitation, and with a face suffused in blushes, she begged my pardon for her gesture; she believed it was her groom who was following her, and had never noticed his absence before. I cannot repeat her words, but in accent, manner, tone, and utterance, I never heard the like of them before. What would I have given at that moment, George, for your glib facility of French! Hang me if I would not have paid down a thousand pounds to have been able to rattle out even some of those trashy commonplaces I have seen you scatter with such effect in the *coulisses* of the opera! It was all of no avail. "Where there 's a will there 's a way," says the adage; but it 's a sorry maxim where a foreign language is concerned. All the volition in the world won't supply irregular verbs; and the most go-ahead resolution will never help one to genders.

I did, of course, mutter all that I could think of; and, default of elocution, I made my eyes do duty for my tongue, and with tolerable success too, as her blush betrayed. I derived one advantage, too, from my imperfect French, which is worth recording, — I was perfectly obdurate as to anything she might have replied in opposition to my wishes, and notwithstanding all her scruples to the contrary, persisted in accompanying her back to the town.

If I was delighted with her horsemanship, I was positively enchanted with her conversation; for, the first little novelty of our situation over, she talked away with a frank innocence and artless ease which quite fascinated me. She was, in fact, the very realization of that high-bred manner you have so often told me of as characterizing the best French society. How I wished I could have prolonged that charming ride! I 'm not quite sure that she did n't detect me in a purposed mistake of the road, that cost us an additional mile or two; if she did, she was gracious enough to pardon the offence without even showing any consciousness of it. Short as the road was, George, it left me irretrievably in love. I know you 'll not stand any raptures about beauty, but this much I must and will say, that she is incomparably handsomer than that Sicilian princess you raved about at Ems, and in the same style too, — brunette, but with a dash of color in the cheek, a faint pink, that gives a sparkling brilliancy to the rich warmth of the southern tint. Besides this, — and let me remark, it *is* something, — *my* Countess is not two-and-twenty, at most. Indeed, but for the story of the widowhood, I should guess her as something above nineteen.

There 's a piece of fortune for you! and all — every bit of it — of my own achieving too! No extraneous aid in the shape of friends, or introductory letters. "Alone I did it," as the fellow says in the play. Now, I do think a man might be pardoned a little boastfulness for such a victory, and I freely own I esteem Jem Dodd a sharper fellow than I ever believed him.

Perhaps you suspect all this while that I am going too fast, and that I have taken a casual success for a regular victory. If so, you 're all wrong, my boy. She has struck her flag already, and acknowledged that your humble servant has effected a change in her sentiments that but a few short weeks before she would have pronounced impossible. The truth is, George, "the Tipperary tactics" that win battles in India are just as successful in love. Make no disposi-



A Fleeting Vision.

tions for a general engagement, never trouble your head about cavalry supports, reserves, or the like, but "just go in and win." It is a mighty short "General Order," and cannot possibly be misapprehended. The Countess herself has acknowledged to me, full half a dozen times within the last fortnight, that she was quite unprepared for such warfare. She expected, doubtless, that I'd follow the old rubric, with opera-boxes, bouquets, *marrons glacés*, and so on, for a month or two. Nothing of the kind, George. I frankly told her that she was the most beautiful creature in Europe without knowing it. That it would be little short of a sacrilege she should pass her life in solitude and sorrow, and ten times worse than sacrilege to marry anything but an Irishman. That in all other countries the men are either money-getting, ambitious, or selfish, but that Paddy turns his whole thoughts towards fun and enjoyment. That Napier's Peninsular War and Moore's Melodies might be referred to for evidence of our national tastes; and, in short, such a people for fighting and making love was never recorded in history. She laughed at me for the whole of the first week, grew more serious the second, and now, within the last three days, instead of calling me "Monsieur le Sauvage," "Cosaque Anglais," and so on, she gravely asks my advice about everything, and never ventures on a step without my counsel and approbation. I have been candid with you hitherto, Tiverton, and so I must frankly own that, profiting by the adage that says "stratagem is equally legitimate in love as in war," I have indulged slightly in the strategy of mystification. For instance, I have represented the governor as a great don in his own country, with immense estates, and an ancient title, that he does not assume in consequence of some old act of attainder against the family. My mother I have made a princess in her own right; and here I am on safer ground, for, if called into court, she'll sustain me in every assertion. Of my own self and prospects I have spoken meekly enough, merely hinting that I dislike diplomacy, and would rather live with the woman of my choice in some comparatively less distinguished station, upon a pittance of — say — three or four thousand a year!

This latter assumption, I must observe to you, is the only one ever disputed between us, and many a debate have we had on the subject. She sees, as everybody sees here, that I spend money lavishly, that not only I indulge in everything costly, but that I outbid even the Russians whenever anything is offered for sale; and at this moment my rooms are filled with pictures, china, carved ivory, stained glass, and other such lumber, that I only bought for the *éclat* of the purchase. If you only heard her innocent remonstrances to me about my extravagance, her anxious appeals as to what "le Prince," as she calls my father, will say to all this wastefulness!

It 's a great trial to me sometimes not to laugh at all this, and, indeed, if I did n't know in my heart that I 'll make her the very best of husbands, I 'd be even ashamed of my deceit; but it 's only a pious fraud after all, and the good result will more than atone for the roguery.

I have hinted at our marriage, you see, and I may add that it is all but decided on. There is, however, a difficulty which must be got over first. She was betrothed when a child to a young Neapolitan Prince of the blood, — a brother, I take it, of the present King. This ceremony was overlooked on her first marriage; and had her husband lived, very serious consequences — but of what kind I don't know — might have resulted. Now, before contracting a second union, we must get a dispensation of some sort from the Pope, which I fear will take time, although she says that her uncle, the Cardinal, will do his utmost to expedite it.

Indeed, I may mention, incidentally, that she is a great favorite with his Eminence, and *we* hope to be his heirs! Egad, George, I almost fancy myself "punting" his Eminence's gold pieces at hazard, with his signet-ring on my finger! What a house I 'll keep, old fellow! what a stable! what a cellar! — and such cigars! Meanwhile I look to you to aid and abet me in various ways. The Countess, like all foreigners of real rank, knows our peerage and nobility off by heart; and she constantly asks me if I know the Marquis of this, and the Duchess of that, and I 'm sorely put to, to show cause why I 'm not intimate with them all.

Now, my dear Tiverton, can't you somehow give me the Shibboleth amongst these high-priests of Fashion, and get me into the Tabernacle, if only for a season? I used myself to know some of the swells of London life when I was at Baden, but, to be sure, I lost a deal of money to them at "creps" and "lansquenet" as the price of the intimacy; and when "*I* shut up," so did *they* too. You, I 'm sure, however, will hit upon some expedient to gain me at least acceptance and recognition for a week or two. I only want the outward signs of acquaintanceship, mark you, for I honestly own that all I ever saw during my brief intimacy with these fellows gave me anything but a high "taste of their quality."

I 'll enclose you the list of the distinguished company now here, and you 'll pick out any to whom you can present me. Another, and not a less important service, I also look to at your hands, which is, to break all this to the governor, to whom I 'm half ashamed to write myself. In the first place, a recent event, of which I may speak more fully to you hereafter, may have made the old gent somewhat suspectful; and secondly, he 'll be fraptious about my not going over to England; although, I 'll take my oath, if he wants it, that I 'd pitch up the appointment to-morrow, if I had it. At the best, I don't suppose they 'd make me more than a Secretary of Legation; and *that*, perhaps, at the Hague, or Stuttgard, or some other confounded capital of fog and flunkeydom; and I need n't say your friend Jem is not going to "enter for such stakes."

You 'd like to know our plans; and so far as I can make out, we 're not to marry till we reach Italy. At Milan, probably, the dispensation will reach us, and the ceremony will be performed by the Arch B. himself. This she insists upon; for about church matters and dignitaries she stickles to a degree that I 'd laugh at if I dare; and that I intend to do later on, when I can *dare* with impunity.

Except this, and a most inordinate amount of prudery, she has n't a fault on earth. Her reserve is, however, awful; and I almost spoiled everything t' other evening by venturing to kiss her hand before she drew her glove on. By Jove, did n't she give me a lecture! If any one had only overheard her, I 'm not sure they would n't have thought me a lucky fellow to get off with transportation for life! As it was, I had to enter into heavy recognizances for the future, and was even threatened with having Mademoiselle Pauline, her maid, present at all our subsequent meetings! The very menace made me half crazy!

After all, the fault is on the right side; and I suppose the day will come when I shall deem it the very reverse of a failing. You will be curious to know something about her fortune, but not a whit more so than I am. That her means are ample — even splendid — her style of living evidences. The whole "premier" of a fashionable hotel, four saddle-horses, two carriages, and a tribe of servants are a strong security for a well-filled purse; but more than that I can ascertain nothing.

As for myself, my supplies will only carry me through a very short campaign, so that I am driven of necessity to hasten matters as much as possible. Now, my dear Tiverton, you know my whole story; and I beg you to lose no time in giving me your very best and shrewdest counsels. Put me up to everything you can think of about settlements, and so forth; and tell me if marrying a foreigner in any way affects my nationality. In brief, turn the thing over in your mind in all manner of ways, and let me have the result.

She is confoundedly particular about knowing that my family approve of the match; and though I have represented myself as being perfectly independent of them on the score of fortune, — which, so far as not expecting a shilling from them, is strictly true, — I shall probably be obliged to obtain something in the shape of a formal consent and paternal benediction; in which case I reckon implicitly on you to negotiate the matter.

I have been just interrupted by the arrival of a packet from Paris. It is a necklace and some other trumpery I had sent for to "Le Roux." She is in ecstasy with it, but cannot conceal her terror at my extravagance. The twenty thousand francs it cost are a cheap price for the remark the present elicited: "My miserable 'rente' of a hundred thousand francs," said she, "will be nothing to a man of such wasteful habits." So, then, we have four thousand a year, certain, George; and, as times go, one might do worse.

I have no time for more, as we are going to ride out. Write to me at once, like a good fellow, and give all your spare thoughts to the fortunes of your ever attached friend,

JAMES DODD.

Address me Lucerne, for *she* means to remove from this at once,— the gossips having already taken an interest in us more flattering than agreeable. I shall expect a letter from you at the post-office.

LETTER IX.

MISS MARY ANNE DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., OF THE GRANGE, BRUFF.

VILLA DELLA FONTANA, LAKE OF COMO.

MY DEAR MR. PURCELL, — Poor papa has been so ill since his arrival in Italy, that he could not reply to either of your two last letters, and even now is compelled to employ me as his amanuensis. A misfortune having occurred to our carriage, we were obliged to stop at a small village called Colico, which, as the name implies, was remarkably unhealthy. Here the gout, that had been hovering over him for some days previous, seized him with great violence; no medical aid could be obtained nearer than Milan, a distance of forty miles, and you may imagine the anxiety and terror we all suffered during the interval between despatching the messenger and the arrival of the doctor. As it was, we did not succeed in securing the person we had sent for, he having been that morning sentenced to the galleys for having in his possession some weapon — a surgical instrument, I believe — that was longer or sharper than the law permits; but Dr. Pantuccio came in his stead, and we have every reason to be satisfied with his skill and kindness. He bled papa very largely on Monday, twice on Tuesday, and intends repeating it again to-day, if the strength of the patient allow of it. The debility resulting from all this is, naturally, very great; but papa is able to dictate to me a few particulars in reply to your last. First, as to Crowther's bill of costs: he says, "that he certainly cannot pay it at present," nor does he think he ever will. I do not know how much of this you are to tell Mr. C., but you will be guided by your own discretion in that, as on any other point wherein I may be doubtful. Harris also must wait for his money — and be thankful when he gets it.

You will make no abatement to Healey, but try and get the farm out of his hands, by any means, before he sublets it and runs away to America. Tom Dunne's house, at the cross-roads, had better be repaired; and if a proper representation was made to the Castle about the disturbed state of the country, papa thinks it might be made a police-station, and probably bring twenty pounds a year. He does not like to let Dodsborough for a "Union;" he says it 's time enough when we go back there to make it a poorhouse. As to Paul Davis, he says, "let him foreclose, if he likes; for there are three other claims before his, and he 'll only burn his fingers," — whatever that means.

Papa will give nothing to the schoolhouse till he goes back and examines the children himself; but you are to contiune his subscription to the dispensary, for he thinks over-population is the real ruin of Ireland. I don't exactly understand what he says about allowance for improvements, and he is not in a state to torment him with questions; but it appears to me that you are not to allow anything to anybody till some Bill passes, or does not pass, and after that it is to be arranged differently. I am afraid poor papa's head was wandering here, for he mumbled something about somebody being on a "raft at sea," and hoped he would n't go adrift, and I don't know what besides.

Your post-bill arrived quite safe; but the sum is totally insufficient, and below what he expected. I am sure, if you knew how much irritation it cost him, you would take measures to make a more suitable remittance. I think, on the whole, till papa is perfectly recovered, it would be better to avoid any irritating or unpleasant topics; and if you would talk encouragingly of home prospects, and send him money frequently, it would greatly contribute to his restoration.

I may add, on mamma's part and my own, the assurance of our being ready to submit to any privation, or even misery if necessary, to bring papa's affairs into a healthier condition. Mamma will consent to anything but living in Ireland, which, indeed, I think is more than could be expected from her. As it is, we keep no carriage here, nor have any equipage whatever; our table is simply two courses, and some fruit. We are wearing out all our old-fashioned clothes, and see nobody. If you can suggest any additional mode of economizing, mamma begs you will favor us with a line; meanwhile, she desires me to say that any allusion to "returning to Dodsborough," or any plan "for living abroad as we lived at home" will only embitter the intercourse, which, to be satisfactory, should be free from any irritation between us.

Of course, for the present you will write to mamma, as papa is far from being fit for any communication on matters of business, nor does the doctor anticipate his being able for such for some weeks to come. We have not heard from James since he left this, but are anxiously expecting a letter by every post, and even to see his name in the "Gazette." Cary does not forget that she was always your favorite, and desires me to send her very kindest remembrances, with which I beg you to accept those of very truly yours,

MARY ANNE DODD.

P. S. As it is quite uncertain when papa will be equal to any exertion, mamma thinks it would be advisable to make your remittances, for some time, payable to her name.

The doctor of the dispensary has written to papa, asking his support at some approaching contest for some situation, — I believe under the Poor-law. Will you kindly explain the reasons for which his letter has remained unreplied to? and if papa should not be able to answer, perhaps you could take upon yourself to give him the assistance he desires, as I know pa always esteemed him a very competent person, and kind to the poor. Of course the suggestion is only thrown out for your own consideration, and in strict confidence besides, for I make it a point never to interfere with any of the small details of pa's property.

LETTER X.

MRS. DODD TO MRS. MARY GALLAGHER, DODSBOROUGH.

My dear Molly, — I received your letter in due course, and if it was n't for crying, I could have laughed heartily over it! I don't know, I 'm sure, where you got your elegant description of the Lake of Comus; but I am obliged to tell you it 's very unlike the real article; at all events, there 's one thing I 'm sure of, — it 's a very different matter living here like Queen Caroline, and being shut up in the same house with K. I.; and therefore no more balderdash about my "queenly existence," and so on, that your last was full of.

Here we are, in what they call the Villa of the Fountains, as if there was n't water enough before the door but they must have it spouting up out of a creature's nose in one corner, another blowing it out of a shell, and three naked figures — females, Molly — dancing in a pond of it in the garden, that kept me out of the place till I had them covered with an old mackintosh of K. I.'s. We have forty-seven rooms, and there 's barely furniture, if it was all put together, for four; and there 's a theatre, and a billiard-room, and a chapel; but there 's not a chair would n't give you the lumbago, and the stocks at Bruff is pleasant compared to the grand sofa. The lake comes round three sides of the house, and a mountain shuts in the other one, for there 's no road whatever to it. You think I 'm not in earnest, but it 's as true as I 'm here; the only approach is by water, so that everything has to come in boats. Of course, as long as the weather keeps fine, we 'll manage to send into the town; but when there comes — what we 're sure to have in this season — aquenoctial gales, I don't know what 's to become of us. The natives of the place don't care, for they can live on figs and olives, and those great big green pumpkins they call watermelons; but, after K. I.'s experience, I don't think we 'll try *them*. It was at a little place on the way here, called Colico, that he insisted on having a slice of one of these steeped in rum for his supper, because he saw a creature eating it outside the door. Well, my dear, he relished it so much that he ate two, and — you know the man — would n't stop till he finished a whole melon as big as one of the big stones over the gate piers at home.

"Jemi," says he, when he 'd done, "is this the place the hand-book says you should n't eat any fruit in, or taste the wines of the country?"

"I don't see that," said I; "but Murray says it 's notorious for March miasma, which is most fatal in the fall of the year."

"What 's the name of it?" said he.

I could n't say the word before he gave a screech out of him that made the house ring.

"I 'm a dead man," says he; "that 's the very place I was warned about."

From that minute the pains begun, and he spent the whole night in torture. Lord George, the kindest creature that ever breathed, got out of his bed and set off to Milan for a doctor, but it was late in the afternoon when he got back. Half an hour later, Molly, and it would have been past saving him. As it was, he bled him as if he was veal: for that 's the new system, my dear, and it 's the blood that does us all the harm, and works all the wickedness we suffer from. If it 's true, K. I. will get up an altered man, for I don't think a horse could bear what he 's gone through. Even now he 's as gentle as an infant, Molly, and you would n't know his voice if you heard it. We only go in one at a time to him, except Cary, that never leaves him, and, indeed, he would n't let her quit the room. Sometimes I fancy that he 'll never be the same again, and from a remark or two of the doctor's, I suspect it 's his head they 're afraid of. If it was n't English he raved in, I 'd be dreadfully ashamed of the things he says, and the way he talks of the family.

As it is, he makes cruel mistakes; for he took Lord

George the other night for James, and began talking to him, and warning him against his Lordship. "Don't trust him too far, Jemmy," said he. "If he was n't in disgrace with his equals, he 'd never condescend to keep company with us. Depend on 't, boy, he 's not ' all right,' and I wish we were well rid of him."

Lord George tried to make him believe that he did n't understand him, and said something about the Parliament being prorogued, but K. I. went on: "I suppose, then, our noble friend did n't get his Bill through the Lords?"

"His mind is quite astray to-night," said Lord George, in a whisper, and made a sign for us to creep quietly away, and leave him to Caroline. She understands him best of any of us; and, indeed, one sees her to more advantage when there 's trouble and misery in the house than when we 're all well and prosperous.

We came here for economy, because K. I. determined we should go somewhere that money could n't be spent in. Now, as there is no road, we cannot have horses; and as there are no shops, we cannot make purchases; but, except for the name of the thing, Molly, might n't we as well be at Bruff? I would n't say so to one of the family, but to you, in confidence between ourselves, I own freely I never spent a more dismal three weeks at Dodsborough. Betty Cobb and myself spend our time crying over it the livelong day. Poor creature, she has her own troubles too! That dirty spalpeen she married ran away with all her earnings, and even her clothes; and Mary Anne's maid says that he has two other wives in his own country. She 's made a nice fool of herself, and she sees it now.

How long we 're to stay here in this misery, I can't guess, and K. I.'s convalescence may be, the doctor thinks, a matter of months; and even then, Molly, who knows in what state he 'll come out of it! Nobody can tell if we won't be obliged to take what they call a Confession of Lunacy against him, and make him allow that he 's mad and unfit to manage his affairs. If it was the will of Providence, I 'd just as soon be a widow at once; for, after all, it 's uncertainty that tries the spirits and destroys the constitution worse than any other affliction.

Indeed, till yesterday afternoon, we all thought he was going off in a placid sleep; but he opened one eye a little, and bade Cary draw the window-curtain, that he might look out. He stared for a while at the water coming up to the steps of the door, and almost entirely round the house, and he gave a little smile. "What's he thinking of?" said I, in a whisper; but he heard me at once, and said, "I'll tell you, Jemi, what it was. I was thinking this was an elegant place against the bailiffs." From that moment I saw that the raving had left him, and he was quite himself again.

Now, my dear Molly, you have a true account of the life we lead, and don't you pity us? If your heart does not bleed for me this minute, I don't know you. Write to me soon, and send me the Limerick papers, that has all the news about the Exhibition in Dublin. By all accounts it's doing wonderfully well, and I often wish I could see it. Cary has just come down to take her half-hour's walk on the terrace,— for K. I. makes her do that every evening, though he never thinks of any of the rest of us, — and I must go and take her place; so I write myself

Yours in haste, but in sorrow,

Jemima Dodd.

LETTER XI.

MISS MARY ANNE DODD TO MISS DOOLAN, OF BALLYDOOLAN.

VILLA DELLA FONTANA, COMO.

FORGET thee! No, dearest Kitty. But how could such cruel words have ever escaped your pen? To cease to retain you in memory would be to avow an oblivion of childhood's joys, and of my youth's fondest recollections; of those first expansions of the heart, when, "fold after fold to the fainting air," the petals of my young existence opened one by one before you; when my shadowy fancies grew into bright realities, and the dream-world assumed all the lights and, alas! all the shadows of the actual. The fact was, dearest, papa was very, very ill; I may, indeed, say so dangerously, that at one time our greatest fears were excited for his state; nor was it till within a few days back that I could really throw off all apprehension and revel in that security enjoyed by the others. He is now up for some hours every day, and able to take light sustenance, and even to participate a little in social intercourse, which of course we are most careful to moderate, with every regard to his weak state; but his convalescence makes progress every hour, and already he begins to talk and laugh, and look somewhat like himself.

So confused is my poor head, and so disturbed by late anxieties, that I quite forget if I have written to you since our arrival here; at all events, I will venture on the risk of repetition so far, and say that we are living in a beautiful villa, in a promontory of the Lake of Como. It was the property of the Prince Belgiasso, who is now in exile from his share in the late struggle for Italian independence, and who, in addition to banishment, is obliged to pay above a million of livres — about forty thousand pounds

— to the Austrian Government. Lord George, who knew him intimately in his prosperity, arranged to take the villa for us; and it is confessedly one of the handsomest on the whole lake. Imagine, Kitty, a splendid marble façade, with a Doric portico, so close to the water's edge that the whole stands reflected in the crystal flood; an Alpine mountain at the back; while around and above us the orange and the fig, the vine, the olive, the wild cactus, and the cedar wave their rich foliage, and load the soft air with perfume. It is not alone that Nature unfolds a scene of gorgeous richness and beauty before us; that earth, sky, and water show forth their most beautiful of forms and coloring; but there is, as it were, an atmosphere of voluptuous enjoyment, an inward sense of ecstatic delight, that I never knew nor felt in the colder lands of the north. The very names have a magic in their melody; the song of the passing gondolier; the star-like lamp of the "pescatore," as night steals over the water; the skimming lateen sail, — all breathe of Italy, — glorious, delightful, divine Italy! — land of song, of poetry, and of love!

Oh, how my dearest Kitty would enjoy those delicious nights upon the terrace, where, watching the falling stars, or listening to the far-off sounds of sweet music, we sit for hours long, scarcely speaking! How responsively would her heart beat to the plash of the lake against her rocky seat! and how would her gentle spirit drink in every soothing influence of that fair and beauteous scene! With Lord George it is a passion; and I scarcely know him to be the same being that he was on the other side of the Alps. Young men of fashion in England assume a certain impassive, cold, apathetic air, as though nothing could move them to any sentiment of surprise, admiration, or curiosity about anything; and when by an accident these emotions are excited, the very utmost expression in which their feelings find vent is some piece of town slang, — the turf, the mess-room, the universities, and, I believe, even the House of Commons, are the great nurseries of this valuable gift; and as Lord George has graduated in each of these schools, I take it he was no mean proficient. But how different was the real metal that lay buried under the lacquer of conventionality! Why, dearest Kitty, he is the very soul of passion, — the wildest, most enthusiastic of creatures; he worships Byron, he adores Shelley. He has told me the whole story of his childhood, — one of the most beautiful romances I ever listened to. He passed his youth at Oxford, vacillating between the wildest dissipations and the most brilliant triumphs. After that he went into the Hussars, and then entered the House, moving the Address, as it is called, at one-and-twenty; a career exactly like the great Mr. Pitt's, only that Lord G. really possesses a range of accomplishments and a vast variety of gifts to which the Minister could lay no claim. Amidst all these revelations, poured forth with a frank and almost reckless impetuosity, it was still strange, Kitty, that he never even alluded to the one great and turning misfortune of his life. He did at one time seem approaching it; I thought it was actually on his lips; but he only heaved a deep sigh, and said. "There is yet another episode to tell you, — the darkest, the saddest of all, — but I cannot do it now." I thought he might have heard my heart beating, as he uttered these words; but he was too deeply buried in his own grief. At last he broke the silence that ensued, by pressing my hand fervently to his lips, and saying, "But when the time comes for this, it will also bring the hour for laying myself and my fortunes at your feet, — for calling you by the dearest of all names, — for — " Only fancy, Kitty, — it was just as he got this far that Cary, who really has not a single particle of delicacy in such cases, came up to ask me where she could find some lemons to make a drink for papa! I know I shall never forgive her — I feel that I never can — for her heartless interruption. What really aggravates her conduct, too, was the kind of apology she subsequently made to me in my own room. Just imagine her saying, —

"I was certain it would be a perfect boon to you to get away from that tiresome creature."

If you only saw him, Kitty! if you only heard him! But all I said was, —

"There is certainly the merit of a discovery in your remark, Cary; for I fancy you are the first who has found out Lord George Tiverton to be tiresome!"

"I only meant," said she, "that his eternal egotism grows wearisome at last, and that the most interesting person in the world would benefit by occasionally discussing something besides himself."

"Captain Morris, for instance," said I, sharply.

"Even so," said she, laughing; "only I half suspect the theme is one he'll not touch upon!" And with this she left the room.

The fact is, Kitty, jealousy of Lord George's rank, his high station, and his aristocratic connections are the real secret of her animosity to him. She feels and sees how small "her poor Captain" appears beside him, and of course the reflection is anything but agreeable. Yet I am sure she might know that I would do everything in my power to diminish the width of that gulf between them, and that I would study to reconcile the discrepancies and assuage the differences of their so very dissimilar stations. She may, it is true, place this beyond my power to effect; but the fault in that case will be purely and solely her own.

You do me no more than justice, Kitty, in saying that you are sure I will feel happy at anything which can conduce to the welfare of Dr. B.; and I unite with you in wishing him every success his new career can bestow. Not but, dearest, I must say that, judging from the knowledge I now possess of life and the world, I should augur more favorably of his prospects had he still remained in that quiet obscurity for which his talents and habits best adapt him than adventure upon the more ambitious but perilous career he has just embarked in. You tell me that, having gone up to Dublin to thank one of his patrons at the late election, he was invited to a dinner, where he made the acquaintance of the Earl of Darewood; and that the noble Lord, now Ambassador at Constantinople, was so struck with his capacity, knowledge, and great modesty that he made him at once an offer of the post of Physician to the Embassy, which with equal promptitude was accepted.

Very flatteringly as this reads, dearest, it is the very climax of improbability; and I have the very strongest conviction that the whole appointment is wholly and solely due to the secret influence of Lord George Tiverton, who is the

Earl's nephew. In the first place, Kitty, supposing that the great Earl and the small Dispensary Doctor did really meet at the same dinner-table, — an incident just as unlikely as need be conceived, — how many and what opportunities would there exist for that degree of intercourse of which you speak?

If the noble Lord did speak at all to the Doctor, it would have been in a passing remark, an easily answered question as to the sanitary state of his neighborhood, or a chance allusion to the march of the cholera in the north of Europe, — so at least Lord G. says; and, moreover, that if the Doctor did, by any accident, evidence any of the qualities for which you give him credit, save the modesty, that the Earl would have just as certainly turned away from him, as a very forward, presuming person, quite forgetful of his station, and where he was then standing. You can perceive from this that I have read the paragraph in yours to Lord G.; but I have done more, Kitty: I have positively taxed him with having obtained the appointment in consequence of a chance allusion I had made to Dr. B. a few weeks ago. He denies it, dearest; but how? He says, "Oh, my worthy uncle never reads *my* letters; he'd throw them aside after a line or two; he's angry with me, besides, for not going into the 'line,' as they call Diplomacy, and would scarcely do me a favor if I pressed him ever so much."

When urged further, he only laughed, and, lighting his cigar, puffed away for a moment or two; after which he said in his careless way: "After all, it mightn't have been a bad dodge of me to send the Doctor off to Turkey. He was an old admirer, wasn't he?"

After this, Kitty, to allude to the subject was impossible, and here I had to leave it. But who could possibly have insinuated such a scandal concerning me? or how could it have occurred to malignant ingenuity to couple my name with that of a person in his station? I cried the entire evening in my own room as I thought over the disgrace to which the bare allusion exposed me.

Is there not a fatality, then, I ask you, in everything that ties us to Ireland? Are not the chance references to that country full of low and unhappy associations? and yet you can talk to me of "when we come back again."

We are daily becoming more uneasy about James. He is now several weeks gone, and not a line has reached us to say where he is, or what success has attended him. I know his high-spirited nature so well, and how any reverse or disappointment would inevitably drive him to the wildest excesses, that I am in agony about him. A letter in your brother's hand is now here awaiting him, so that I can perceive that even Robert is as ignorant of his fate as we are.

All these cares, dearest, will have doubtless thrown their shadows over this dreary epistle, the reflex of my darkened spirit. Bear with and pity me, dearest Kitty; and even when calmer reason refuses to follow the more headlong impulses of my feeling, still care for, still love

Your ever heart-attached and devoted

MARY ANNE DODD.

P. S. The post has just arrived, bringing a letter for Lord G. in James's hand. It was addressed Bregenz, and has been several days on the road. How I long to learn its tidings! But I cannot detain this; so again good-bye.

LETTER XII.

KENNY JAMES DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., OF THE GRANGE, BRUFF.

LAKE OF COMO.

MY DEAR TOM, — Though I begin this to-day, it may be it will take me to the end of the week to finish it, for I am still very weak, and my ideas come sometimes too quick and sometimes too slow, and, like an ill-ordered procession, stop the road, and make confusion everywhere. Mary Anne has told you how I have been ill, and for both our sakes, I 'll say little more about it. One remark, however, I will make, and it is this: that of all the good qualities we ascribe to home, there is one unquestionably pre-eminent, — "it is the very best place to be sick in." The monotony and sameness so wearisome in health are boons to the sick man. The old familiar faces are all dear to him; the well-known voices do not disturb him; the little gleam of light that steals in between the curtains checkers some accustomed spot in the room that he has watched on many a former sick-bed. The stray words he catches are of home and homely topics. In a word, he is the centre of a little world, all anxious and eager about him, and even the old watch-dog subdues his growl out of deference to his comfort.

Now, though I am all gratitude for the affection and kindness of every one around me, I missed twenty things I could have had at Dodsborough, not one of them worth a brass farthing in reality, but priceless in the estimation of that peevish, fretful habit that grows out of a sick-bed. It was such a comfort to me to know how Miles Dogherty passed the night, and to learn whether he got a little sleep towards morning, as I did, and what the doctor thought of him. Then I liked to hear all the adventures of Joe Barret, when he "went in" for the leeches, how the mare threw him, and left him to scramble home on his feet. Then I revelled in all that petty tyranny illness admits of, but which is only practicable amongst one's own people, refusing this, and insisting on that, just to exercise the little despotism that none rebel against, but which declines into a mixed monarchy on the first day you eat chicken-broth, and from which you are utterly deposed when you can dine at table. In good truth, Tom, I don't wonder at men becoming *malades imaginaires*, seeing the unnatural importance they attain to by a life of complaining, and days passed in self-commiseration and sorrow.

In place of all this, think of a foreign country and a foreign doctor; fancy yourself interrogated about your feelings in a language of which you scarcely know a word, and are conscious that a wrong tense in your verb may be your death-warrant. Imagine yourself endeavoring, through the flighty visions of a wandering intellect, to find out the subjunctive mood or the past participle, and almost forgetting the torment of your gout in the terrors of your grammar!

This is a tiresome theme, and let us change it. Like all home-grown people, I see you expect me to send you a full account of Italy and the Italians within a month after my crossing the Alps. It is, after all, a pardonable blunder on your part, since the very titles we read to books of travels in the newspapers show that for sketchy books there are always to be found "skipping" readers. Hence that host of surface-description that finds its way into print from men who have the impudence to introduce themselves as writers of "Jottings from my Note-Book," "Loose Leaves from my Log," "Smoke Puffs from Germany," and "A Canter over the Caucasus." Cannot these worthy folk see that the very names of their books are exactly the apologies they should offer for not having written them, had any kind but indiscreet friend urged them into letterpress? "I was only three weeks in Sweden, and therefore I wrote about it," seems to me as ugly a *non sequitur* as need be. And now, Tom, that I have inveighed against the custom, I am quite ready to follow the example, and if you could only find me a publisher, I am open to an offer for a tight little octavo, to be called "Italy from my Bedroom Window."

Most writers set out by bespeaking your attention on the ground of their greater opportunities, their influential acquaintances, position, and so forth. To this end, therefore, must I tell you that my bedroom window, besides a half-view of the lake, has a full look-out over a very picturesque landscape of undulating surface, dotted with villas and cottages, and backed by a high mountain, which forms the frontier towards Switzerland. At the first glance it seems to be a dense wood, with foliage of various shades of green, but gradually you detect little patches of maize and rice, and occasionally, too, a green crop of wurzel or turnips, which would be creditable even in England; but the vine and the olive surround these so completely, or the great mulberry-trees enshadow them so thoroughly, that at a distance they quite escape view. The soil is intersected everywhere by canals for irrigation, and water is treasured up in tanks, and conveyed in wooden troughs for miles and miles of distance, with a care that shows the just value they ascribe to it. Their husbandry is all spade work, and I must say neatly and efficiently done. Of course, I am here speaking of what falls under my own observation; and it is, besides, a little pet spot of rich proprietors, with tasteful villas, and handsomely laid-out gardens on every side; but as the system is the same generally, I conclude that the results are tolerably alike also. The system is this: that the landlord contributes the soil, and the peasant the labor, the produce being fairly divided afterwards in equal portions between them. It reads simple enough, and it does not sound unreasonable either; while, with certain drawbacks, it unquestionably contains some great advantages. To the landlord it affords a fair and a certain remuneration, subject only to the vicissitudes of seasons and the rate of prices. It attaches him to the soil, and to those who till it, by the very strongest of all interests, and, even on selfish grounds, enforces a degree of regard for the well-being of those beneath him. The peasant, on the other hand, is neither a rack-rented tenant nor a hireling, but an independent man, profiting by every exercise of his own industry, and deriving direct and positive benefit from every hour of his labor. It is not alone his character that is served by the care he bestows on the culture of the land, but every comfort of himself and his family are the consequences of it; and lastly, he is not obliged to convert his produce into money to meet the rent-day. I am no political economist, but it strikes me that it is a great burden on a poor man, that he must buy a certain commodity in the shape of a legal tender, to satisfy the claim of a landlord. Now, here the peasant has no such charge. The day of reckoning divides the produce, and the "state of the currency" never enters into the question. He has neither to hunt fairs nor markets, look out for "dealers" to dispose of his stock, nor solicit a banker to discount his small bill. All these are benefits, Tom, and some of them great ones too. The disadvantages are that the capabilities of the soil are not developed by the skilful employment of capital. The landlord will not lay out money of which he is only to receive one-half the profit. The peasant has the same motive, and has not the money besides. The result is that Italy makes no other progress in agriculture than the skill of an individual husbandman can bestow. Here are no Smiths of Deanstown, — no Sinclairs, — no Mechis. The grape ripens and the olive grows as it did centuries ago; and so will both doubtless continue to do for ages to come. Again, there is another, and in some respects a greater, grievance, since it is one which saps the very essence of all that is good in the system. The contract is rarely a direct one between landlord and tenant, but is made by the intervention of a third party, who employs the laborers, and really occupies the place of our middlemen at home. The fellow is usually a hard taskmaster to the poor man, and a rogue to the rich one; and it is a common thing, I am told, for a fine estate to find itself at last in the hands of the *fattore*. This is a sore complication, and very difficult to avoid, for there are so many different modes of culture, and such varied ways of treating the crops on an Italian farm, that the overseer must be sought for in some rank above that of the peasant.

We have a notion in Ireland that the Italian lives on maccaroni; depend upon it, Tom, he seasons it with something better. In the little village beside me, there are three butchers' shops, and as the wealthy of the neighborhood all market at Como, these are the recourse of the poorer classes. Of wine he has abundance; and as to vegetables and fruits, the soil teems with them in a rich luxuriance of which I cannot give you a notion. Great barges pass my window every morning, with melons, cucumbers, and cauliflowers, piled up half-mast high. How a Dutch painter would revel in the picturesque profusion of grapes, peaches, figs, and apricots, heaped up amidst huge pumpkins of bursting ripeness, and those brilliant "love apples," the allusion to which was so costly to Mr. Pickwick. You are smacking your lips already at the bare idea of such an existence. Yes, Tom, you are reproaching Fate for not having "raised" you, as Jonathan says, on the right side of the Alps, and left you to the enjoyments of an easy life, with lax principles, little garments, and a fine climate. But let me tell you, IDLENESS IS ONLY A LUXURY WHERE OTHER PEOPLE ARE OBLIGED TO WORK; where every one indulges in it, it is worth nothing. I remember, when sitting listlessly on a river's bank, of a sunny day, listening to the hum of the bees, or watching the splash of a trout in the water, I used to hug myself in the notion of all the fellows that were screaming away their lungs in the Law Courts, or sitting upon tall stools in dark counting-houses, or poring over Blue-books in a committee-room, or maybe broiling on the banks of the Ganges; and then bethink me of the easy, careless, happy flow of my own existence. I was quite a philosopher in this way, — I despised riches, and smiled at all ambition.

Now there is no such resources for me here. There are eight or nine fellows that pass the day — and the night also, I believe — under my window, that would beat me hollow in the art of doing nothing, and seem to understand it as a science besides. There they lie — and a nice group they are — on their backs, in the broiling sun; their red nightcaps drawn a little over their faces for shade; their brawny chests and sinewy limbs displayed, as if in derision of their laziness. The very squalor of their rags seems heightened by the tawdry pretension of a scarlet sash round the waist, or a gay flower stuck jauntily in a filthy bonnet. The very knife that stands half buried in the water-melon beside them has its significance, — you have but to glance at the shape to see that, like its owner, its purpose is an evil one. What do these fellows know of labor? Nothing; nor will they, ever, till condemned to it at the galleys. And what a contrast to all around them, — ragged, dirty, and wretched, in the midst of a teeming and glorious abundance; barbarous, in a land that breathes of the very highest civilization, and sunk in brutal ignorance, beside the greatest triumphs of human genius.

What a deal of balderdash people talk about Italian liberty, and the cause of constitutional freedom! There are — and these only in the cities — some twenty or thirty highly cultivated, well-thinking men — lawyers, professors, or physicians, usually — who have taken pains to study the institutions of other countries, and aspire to see some of the benefits that attend them applied to their own; but there ends the party. The nobles are a wretched set, satisfied with the second-hand vices of France and England grafted upon some native rascalities of even less merit. They neither read nor think: their lives are spent in intrigue and play. Now and then a brilliant exception stands forth, distinguished by intellect as well as station; but the little influence he wields is the evidence of what estimation such qualities are held in. My doctor is a Liberal, and a very clever fellow too; and I only wish you heard him describe the men who have assumed the part of "Italian Regenerators."

Their "antecedents" show that in Italy, as elsewhere, patriotism is too often but the last refuge of a scoundrel. I know how all this will grate and jar upon your very Irish ears; and, to say truth, I don't like saying it myself; but still I cannot help feeling that the "Cause of Liberty" in the peninsula is remarkably like the process of grape-gathering that now goes on beneath my window, — there is no care, no selection, — good, bad, ripe, and unripe, — the clean, the filthy, the ruddy, and the sapless, are all huddled together, pressed and squeezed down into a common vat, to ferment into bad wine or — a revolution, as the case may be. It does not require much chemistry to foresee that it is the crude, the acrid, the unhealthy, and the bad that will give the flavor to the liquor. The small element of what is really good is utterly overborne in the vast Maëlstrom of the noxious; and so we see in the late Italian struggle. Who are the men that exercise the widest influence in affairs? Not the calm and reasoning minds that gave the first impulse to wise measures of Reform, and guided their sovereigns to concessions that would have formed the strong foundations of future freedom. No; it was the advocate of the wildest doctrines of Socialism, — the true disciple of the old guillotine school, that ravaged the earth at the close of the last century. These are the fellows who scream "Blood! blood!" till they are hoarse; but, in justice to their discretion, it must be said, they always do it from a good distance off.

Don't fancy from this that I am upholding the Austrian rule in Italy. I believe it to be as bad as need be, and exactly the kind of government likely to debase and degrade a people whom it should have been their object to elevate and enlighten. Just fancy a system of administration where there were all penalties and no rewards, — a school with no premiums but plenty of flogging. That was precisely what they did. They put a "ban" upon the natives of the country; they appointed them to no places of trust or confidence, insulted their feelings, outraged their sense of nationality; and whenever the system had goaded them into a passionate burst of indignation, they proclaimed martial law, and hanged them.

Now, the question is not whether any kind of resistance would not be pardonable against such a state of things, but it is this: what species of resistance is most likely to succeed? This is the real inquiry; and I don't think it demands much knowledge of mankind and the world to say that stabbing a cadet in the back as he leaves a *café*, shooting a solitary sentinel on his post, or even assassinating his corporal as he walks home of an evening, are exactly the appropriate methods for reforming a state or remodelling a constitution. Had the Lombards devoted themselves heart and hand to the material prosperity of their country, — educated their people, employed them in useful works, fostered their rising and most prosperous silk manufactories, — they would have attained to a weight and consideration in the Austrian Empire which would have enabled them not to solicit, but dictate the terms of their administration.

A few years back, as late as '47, Milan, I am told, was more than the rival of Vienna in all that constitutes the pride and splendor of a capital city; and the growing influence of her higher classes was already regarded with jealousy by the Austrian nobility. Look what a revolution has made her now! Her palaces are barracks; her squares are encampments; artillery bivouac in her public gardens; and the rigors of a state of siege penetrate into every private house, and poison all social intercourse.

You may rely upon one thing, Tom, and it is this: that no government ever persisted in a policy of oppression towards a country that was advancing on the road of prosperity. It is to the disaffected, dispirited, bankrupt people — idle and cantankerous, wasting their resources, and squandering their means of wealth — that cabinets play the bully. They grind them the way a cruel colonel flogs a condemned regiment. Let industry and its consequences flow in; let the laborer be well fed, and housed, and clothed; and the spirit of independence in him will be a far stronger and more dangerous element to deal with than the momentary burst of passion that comes from a fevered heart in a famished frame! Ask a Cabinet Minister if he would n't be more frightened by a deputation from the City, than if the telegraph told him a Chartist mob was moving on London? We live in an age of a very peculiar kind, and where real power and real strength are more respected than ever they were before.

Don't you think I have given you a dose of politics? Well, happily for you, I must desist now, for Cary has come to order me off to bed. It is only two P.M., but the siesta is now one of my habits, and so pleasant a one that I intend to keep it when I get well again.

Nine o'clock, Evening.

Here I am again at my desk for you, though Cary has only given me leave to devote half an hour to your edification.

What a good girl it is,— so watchful in all her attention, and with that kind of devotion that shows that her whole heart is engaged in what she is doing! The doctor may fight the malady, Tom, but, take my word for it, it is the nurse that saves the patient. If ever I raised my eyelids, there she was beside me! I could n't make a sign that I was thirsty till she had the drink to my lips. She had, too, that noiseless, quiet way with her, so soothing to a sick man; and, above all, she never bothered with questions, but learned to guess what I wanted, and sat patiently watching at her post.

It is a strange confession to make, but the very best thing I know of this foreign tour of ours is that it has not spoiled that girl; she has contracted no taste for extra finery in dress, nor extra liberty in morals; her good sense is not overlaid by the pretentious tone of those mock nobles that run about calling each other count and marquis, and fancying they are the great world. There she is, as warm-hearted, as natural, and as simple — in all that makes the real excellence of simplicity — as when she left home. And now, with all this, I 'd wager a crown that nineteen young fellows out of twenty would prefer Mary Anne to her. She is, to be sure, a fine, showy girl, and has taken to a stylish line of character so naturally that she never abandons it.

I assure you, Tom, the way she used to come in of a morning to ask me how I was, and how I passed the night; her graceful stoop to kiss me; her tender little caressing twaddle, as if I was a small child to be bribed into black-bottle by sugar-candy,— were as good as a play. The little extracts, too, that she made from the newspapers to amuse me were all from that interesting column called fashionable intelligence, and the movements in fashionable life, as if it amused me to hear who Lady Jemima married, and who gave away the bride. Cary knew better what I cared for, and told me about the harvest and the crops, and the state of the potatoes, with now and then a spice of the foreign news, whenever there was anything remarkable. To all appearance, we are not far from a war; but where it 's to be, and with whom, is hard to say. There 's no doubt but fighting is a costly amusement; and I believe no country pays so heavily for her fun in that shape as England; but, nevertheless, there is nothing would so much tend to revive her drooping and declining influence on the Continent as a little brush at sea. She is, I take it, as good as certain to be victorious; and the very fervor of the enthusiasm success would evoke in England would go far to disabuse the foreigner of his notion that we are only eager about printing calicoes, and sharpening Sheffield ware. Believe me, it is vital to us to eradicate this fallacy; and until the world sees a British fleet reeling up the Downs with some half-dozen dismasted line-of-battle ships in their wake, they 'll not be convinced of what you and I know well, — that we are just the same people that fought the Nile and Trafalgar. Those Industrial Exhibitions, I think, brought out a great deal of trashy sentimentality about universal brotherhood, peace, and the rest of it. I suppose the Crystal Palace rage was a kind of allegory to show that they who live in glass houses should n't throw stones; but our ships, Tom, — our ships, as the song says, are "hearts of oak"! Here 's Cary again, and with a confounded cupful of something green at top and muddy below! Apothecaries are filthy distillers all the world over, and one never knows the real blessing of health till one has escaped from their beastly brewings. Good-night.

Saturday Morning.

A regular Italian morning, Tom, and such a view! The mists are swooping down the Alps, and showing cliffs and crags in every tint of sunlit verdure. The lake is blue as a dark turquoise, reflecting the banks and their hundred villas in the calm water. The odor of the orange-flower and the oleander load the air, and, except my vagabonds under the window, there is not an element of the picture devoid of interest and beauty. There they are as usual; one of them has his arm in a bloody rag, I perceive, the consequence of a row last night, — at least, Paddy Byrne saw a fellow wiping his knife and washing his hands in the lake — very suspicious circumstances — just as he was going to bed.

I have been hearing all about our neighbors, — at least, Cary has been interrogating the gardener, and "reporting progress" to me as well as she could make him out. This Lake of Como seems the paradise of *ci-devant* theatrical folk; all the prima donnas who have amassed millions, and all the dancers that have pirouetted into great wealth, appear to have fixed their ambition on retiring to this spot. Of a truth, it is the very antithesis to a stage existence. The silent and almost solemn grandeur of the scene, the massive Alps, the deep dense woods, the calm unbroken stillness, are strong contrasts to the crash and tumult, the unreality and uproar of a theatre. I wonder, do they enjoy the change? I am curious to know if they yearn for the blaze of the dress-circle and the waving pit? Do they long at heart for the stormy crash of the orchestra and the maddening torrent of applause; and does the actual world of real flowers and trees and terraces and fountains seem in their eyes a poor counterfeit of the dramatic one? It would not be unnatural if it were so. There is the same narrowing tendency in every professional career. The doctor, the laywer, the priest, the soldier,— ay, and even your Parliament man, if he be an old member, has got to take a House of Commons standard for everything and everybody. It is only your true idler, your genuine good-for-nothing vagabond, that ever takes wide or liberal views of life; one like myself, in short, whose prejudices have not been fostered by any kind of education, and who, whatever he knows of mankind, is sure to be his own.

They 've carried away my ink-bottle, to write acknowledgments and apologies for certain invitations the womenkind have received to go and see fireworks somewhere on the lake; for these exhibitions seem to be a passion with Italians! I wish they were fonder of burning powder to more purpose! I 'm to dine below to-day, so it is likely that I 'll not be able to add anything to this before to-morrow, when I mean to despatch it. A neighbor, I hear, has sent us a fine trout; and another has forwarded a magnificent present of fruit and vegetables,— very graceful civilities these to a stranger, and worthy of record and remembrance. Lord George tells me that these Lombard lords are fine fellows, — that is, they keep splendid houses and capital horses, have first-rate cooks, and London-built carriages, — and, as he adds, will bet you what you like at piquet or *écarté*. Egad, such qualities have great success in the world, despite all that moralists may say of them!

The ink has come back, but it is *I* am dry now! The fact is, Tom, that very little exertion goes far with a man in this climate! It is scarcely noon, but the sultry heat is most oppressive; and I half agree with my friends under the window, that the dorsal attitude is the true one for Italy. In any other country you want to be up and doing: there are snipe or woodcocks to be shot, a salmon to kill, or a fox to hunt; you have to look at the potatoes or the poorhouse; there 's a row, or a road session, or something or other to employ you; but here, it 's a snug spot in the shade you look for, — six feet of even ground under a tree; and with that the hours go glibly over, in a manner that is quite miraculous.

It ought to be the best place under the sun for men of small fortune. The climate alone is an immense economy in furs and firing; and there is scarcely a luxury that is not, somehow or other, the growth of the soil: on this head — the expense I mean — I can tell you nothing, for, of course, I have not served on any committee of the estimates since my illness; but I intend to audit the accounts to-morrow, and then you shall hear all. Tiverton, I understand, has taken the management of everything; and Mrs. D. and Mary Anne tell me, so excellent is his system, that a rebellion has broken out below stairs. and three of our household have resigned, carrying away various articles of wardrobe, and other property, as an indemnity, doubtless, for the treatment they had met with. I half suspect that any economy in dinners is more than compensated for in broken crockery; for every time that a fellow is scolded in the drawing-room, there is sure to be a smash in the plate department immediately afterwards, showing that the national custom of the "vendetta" can be carried into the "willow pattern." This is one of my window observations. I wish there were no worse ones to record.

"Not a line, not another word, till you take your broth, papa," says my kind nurse; and as after my broth I take my sleep, I 'll just take leave of you for to-day. I wish I may remember even half of what I wanted to say to you to-morrow, but I have a strong moral conviction that I shall not. It is not that the oblivion will be any loss to you, Tom; but when I think of it, after the letter is gone, I 'm fit to be tied with impatience. Depend upon it, a condition of hopeless repining for the past is a more terrible torture than all that the most glowing imagination of coming evil could ever compass or conceive.

Sunday Afternoon.

I told you yesterday I had not much faith in my memory retaining even a tithe of what I wished to say to you. The case is far worse than that, — I can really recollect nothing. I know that I had questions to ask, doubts to resolve, and directions to give, but they are all so commingled and blended together in my distracted brain that I can make nothing out of the disorder. The fact is, Tom, the fellow has bled me too far, and it is not at my time of life — 58° in the shade, by old Time's thermometer — that one rallies quickly out of the hands of the doctor.

I thought myself well enough this morning to look over my accounts; indeed, I felt certain that the inquiry could not be prudently delayed, so I sent for Mary Anne after breakfast, and proceeded in state to a grand audit. I have already informed you that all the material of life here is the very cheapest, — meat about fourpence a pound; bread and butter and milk and vegetables still more reasonable; wine, such as it is, twopence a bottle; fruit for half nothing. It was not, therefore, any inordinate expectation on my part that we should be economizing in rare style, and making up for past extravagance by real retrenchment. I actually looked forward to the day of reckoning as a kind of holiday from all care, and for once in my life revel in the satisfaction of having done a prudent thing.

Conceive my misery and disappointment — I was too weak for rage — to find that our daily expenses here, with a most moderate household, and no company, amounted to a fraction over five pounds English a day. The broad fact so overwhelmed me that it was only with camphor-julep and ether that I got over it, and could proceed to details. Proceed to details, do I say! Much good did it do me! for what between a new coinage, new weights and measures, and a new language, I got soon into a confusion and embarrassment that would have been too much for my brain in its best days. Now and then I began to hope that I had grappled with a fact, even a small one; but, alas! it was only a delusion, for though the prices were strictly as I told you, there was no means of even approximating to the quantities ordered in. On a rough calculation, however, it appears that *my* mutton broth took half a sheep *per diem*. The family consumed about two cows a week in beef; besides hares, pheasants, hams, and capons at will. The servants — with a fourth of the wine set down to me — could never have been sober an hour; while our vegetable and fruit supply would have rivalled Covent Garden Market.

"Do you understand this, Mary Anne?" said I.

"No, papa," said she.

"Does your mother?" said I.

"No, papa."

"Does Lord George understand it?"

"No, papa; but he says he is sure Giacomo can explain everything,— for he is a capital fellow, and honest as the sun!"

"And who is Giacomo?" said I.

"The Maestro di Casa, papa. He is over all the other servants, pays all the bills, keeps the keys of everything, and, in fact, takes charge of the household."

"Where did he come from?"

"The Prince Belgiasso had him in his service, and strongly recommended him to Lord George as the most trustworthy and best of servants. His discharge says that he was always regarded rather in the light of a friend than a domestic!"

Shall I own to you, Tom, that I shuddered as I heard this? It may be a most unfair and ungenerous prejudice; but if there be any class in life of whose good qualities I entertain a weak opinion, it is of the servant tribe, and especially of those who enter into the confidential category. They are, to my thinking, a pestilent race, either tyrannizing over the weakness, or fawning to the vices, of their employers. I have known a score of them, and I rejoice to think that a very large proportion of that number have been since transported for life.

"Does Giacomo speak English?" asked I.

"Perfectly, papa; as well as French, Spanish, German, and a little Russian."

"Send him to me, then," said I, "and let us have a talk together.

"You can't see him to-day, papa, for he is performing St. Barnabas in a grand procession that is to take place this evening."

This piece of information shows me that it is a "Festa," and the post will consequently close early, so that I now conclude this, promising that you shall have an account of my interview with Giacomo by to-morrow or the day after.

Not a line from James yet, and I am beginning to feel very uncomfortable about him.

Yours ever faithfully,

KENNY I. DODD.

LETTER XIII.

KENNY JAMES DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., OF THE GRANGE, BRUFF.

COMO.

MY DEAR TOM, — This may perchance be a lengthy despatch, for I have just received a polite invitation from the authorities here to pack off, bag and baggage, over the frontier; and as it is doubtful where our next move may take us, I write this "in extenso," and to clear off all arrears up to the present date.

At the conclusion of my last, if I remember aright, I was in anxious expectation of a visit from Signor Giacomo Lamporeccho. That accomplished gentleman, however, had been so fatigued by his labors in the procession, and so ill from a determination of blood to the head, brought on by being tied for two hours to a tree, with his legs uppermost, to represent the saint's martyrdom, that he could not wait upon me till the third day after the Festa; and then his streaked eyeballs and flushed face attested that even mock holiness is a costly performance.

"You are Giacomo?" said I, as he entered; and I ought to mention that in air and appearance he was a large, full, fine-looking man, of about eight-and-thirty or forty, dressed in very accurate black, and with a splendid chain of mosaic gold twined and festooned across his ample chest; opal shirt-studs and waistcoat buttons, and a very gorgeous-looking signet-ring on his forefinger aided to show off a stylish look, rendered still more imposing by a beard a Grand Vizier might have envied, and a voice a semi-tone deeper than Lablache's.

"Giacomo Lamporeccho," said he; and though he uttered the words like a human bassoon, they really sounded as if he preferred not to be himself, but somebody else, in case I desired it.

"Well, Giacomo," said I, easily, and trying to assume as much familiarity as I could with so imposing a personage, "I want you to afford me some information about these accounts of mine."

"Ah! the house accounts!" said he, with a very slight elevation of the eyebrows, but quite sufficient to convey to me an expression of contemptuous meaning.

"Just so, Giacomo; they appear to me high, — enormously, extravagantly high!"

"His Excellency paid, at least, the double in London," said he, bowing.

"That 's not the question. We are in Lombardy, — a land where the price of everything is of the cheapest. How comes it, then, that we are maintaining our house at greater cost than even Paris would require?"

With a volubility that I can make no pretension to follow, the fellow ran over the prices of bread, meat, fowls, and fish, showing that they were for half their cost elsewhere; that his Excellency's table was actually a mean one; that sea-fish from Venice, and ortolans, seldom figured at it above once or twice a week; that it was rare to see a second flask of champagne opened at dinner; that our Bordeaux was bad, and our Burgundy bitter; in short, he thought his Excellency had come expressly for economy, as great "milors" will occasionally do, and that if so, he must have had ample reason to be satisfied with the experiment.

Though every sentiment the fellow uttered was an impertinence, he bowed and smiled, and demeaned himself with such an air of humility throughout, that I stood puzzled between the matter and the manner of his address. Meanwhile he was not idle, but running over with glib volubility the names of all the "illustrissimi Inglesi" he had been cheating and robbing for a dozen years back. To nail him to the fact of the difference between the cost of the article and the gross sum expended, was downright impossible, though he clearly gave to understand that any inquiry into the matter showed his Excellency to be the shabbiest of men, — mean, grasping, and avaricious, and, in fact, very likely to be no "milor" at all, but some poor pretender to rank and station.

I felt myself waxing wroth with a weak frame, — about as unpleasant a situation as can be fancied; for let me observe to you, Tom, that the brawny proportions of Signor Lamporecchio would not have prevented my trying conclusion with him, had I been what you last saw me; but, alas! the Italian doctor had bled me down so low that I was not even a match for one of his countrymen. I was therefore obliged to inform my friend that, being alone with him, and our interview having taken the form of a privileged communication, he was a thief and a robber!

The words were not uttered, when he drew a long and glistening knife from behind his back, under his coat, and made a rush at me. I seized the butt-end of James's fishing-rod, — fortunately beside me, — and held him at bay, shouting wildly, "Murder!" all the while. The room was filled in an instant; Tiverton and the girls, followed by all the servants and several peasants, rushing in pell-mell. Before, however, I could speak, for I was almost choked with passion, Signor Giacomo had gained Lord George's ear, and evidently made him his partisan.

Tiverton cleared the room as fast as he could, mumbling out something to the girls that seemed to satisfy them and allay their fears, and then, closing the door, took his seat beside me.

"It will not signify," said he to me, in a kind voice; "the thing is only a scratch, and will be well in a day or two."

"What do you mean?" said I.

"Egad! you 'll have to be cautious, though," said he, laughing. "It was in a very awkward place; and that too is n't the handiest for minute anatomy."

"Do you want to drive me mad, my Lord; for, if not, just take the trouble to explain yourself."

"Pooh, pooh!" said he; "don't fuss yourself about nothing. I understand how to deal with these fellows. You 'll see, five-and-twenty Naps. will set it all right."

"I see," said I, "your intention is to outrage me; and I beg that I may be left alone."

"Come, don't be angry with *me*, Dodd," cried he, in one of his good-tempered, coaxing ways. "*I* know well you 'd never have done it — "

"Done what, — done what?" screamed I, in an agony of rage.

He made a gesture with the fishing-rod, and burst out a-laughing for reply.

"Do you mean that I stuck that scoundrel that has just gone out?" cried I.

"And no great harm, either!" said he.

"Do you mean that I stuck him? — answer me that."

"Well, I 'd be just as much pleased if you had not," said he; "for, though they are always punching holes into each other, they don't like an Englishman to do it. Still, keep quiet, and I 'll set it all straight before to-morrow. The doctor shall give a certificate, setting forth mental excitement, and so forth. We 'll show that you are not quite responsible for your actions just now."

"Egad, you 'll have a proof of your theory, if you go on much longer at this rate," said I, grinding my teeth with passion.

"And then we 'll get up a provocation of some kind or other. Of course, the thing will cost money, — that can't be helped; but we 'll try to escape imprisonment."

"Send Cary to me, — send my daughter here!" said I, for I was growing weak.

"But had n't you better let us concert — "

"Send Cary to me, my Lord, and leave me!" and I said the words in a way that he could n't misunderstand. He had scarcely quitted the room when Cary entered it.

"There, dearest papa," said she, caressingly, "don't fret. It 's a mere trifle; and if he was n't a wretchedly cowardly creature, he 'd think nothing of it!"

"Are you in the conspiracy against me too?" cried I; "have *you* also joined the enemy?"

"That I have n't," said she, putting an arm round my neck; "and I know well, if the fellow had not grossly outraged, or perhaps menaced you, you 'd never have done it! I 'm certain of that, pappy!"

Egad, Tom, I don't like to own it, but the truth is — I burst out a-crying; that 's what all this bleeding and lowering has brought me to, that I have n't the nerve of a kitten! It was the inability to rebut all this balderdash — to show that it was a lie from beginning to end — confounded me; and when I saw my poor Cary, that never believed ill of me before, that, no matter what I said or did, always took my part, and if she could n't defend at least excused me, — when, I say, I saw that *she* gave in to this infernal delusion, I just felt as if my heart was going to break, and I sincerely wished it might.

I tried very hard to summon strength to set her right; I suppose that a drowning man never struggled harder to reach a plank than did I to grasp one thought well and vigorously; but to no use. My ideas danced about like the phantoms in a magic lantern, and none would remain long enough to be recognized.

"I think I 'll take a sleep, my dear," said I.

"The very wisest thing you could do, pappy," said she, closing the shutters noiselessly, and sitting down in her old place beside my bed.

Though I pretended slumber, I never slept a wink. I went over all this affair in my mind, and, summing up the evidence against me, I began to wonder if a man ever committed a homicide without knowing it, — I mean, if, when his thoughts were very much occupied, he could stick a fellow-creature and not be aware of it. I could n't exactly call any case in point to mind, but I did n't see why it might not be possible. If stabbing people was a common and daily habit of an individual, doubtless he might do it, just as he would wind his watch or wipe his spectacles, while thinking of something else; but as it was not a customary process, at least where I came from, there was the difficulty. I would have given more than I had to give, just to ask Cary a few questions, — as, for instance, how did it happen? where is the wound? how deep is it? and so on, — but I was so terrified lest I should compromise my innocence that I would not venture on a syllable. One sees constantly in the police reports how the prisoner, when driving off to jail with Inspector Potts, invariably betrays himself by some expression of anxiety or uneasiness, such as "Well, nobody can say I did it! I was in Houndsditch till eleven o'clock;" or, "Poor Molly, I did n't mean her any harm, but it was she begun it." Warned by these indiscreet admissions, I was guarded not to utter a word. I preserved my resolution with such firmness that I fell into a sound sleep, and never awoke till the next morning.

Before I acknowledged myself to be awake, — don't you know that state, Tom, in which a man vibrates between consciousness and indolence, and when he has not fully made up his mind whether he'll not skulk his load of daily cares a little longer? — I could perceive that there was a certain stir and movement about me that betokened extraordinary preparation, and I could overhear little scraps of discussions as to whether "he ought to be awakened," and "what he should wear," Cary's voice being strongly marked in opposition to everything that portended any disturbance of me. Patience, I believe, is not my forte, though long-suffering may be my fortune, for I sharply asked, "What the —— was in the wind now?"

"We'll leave him to Cary," said Mrs. D., retiring precipitately, followed by the rest, while Cary came up to my bedside, and kindly began her inquiries about my health; but I stopped her, by a very abrupt repetition of my former question.

"Oh! it's a mere nothing, pappy, — a formality, and nothing more. That creature, Giacomo, has been making a fuss over the affair of last night; and though Lord George endeavored to settle it, he refused, and went off to the Tribunal to lodge a complaint."

"Well, go on."

"The Judge, or Prefect, or whatever he is, took his depositions, and issued a warrant — "

"To apprehend me?"

"Don't flurry yourself, dearest pappy; these are simply formalities, for the Brigadier has just told me — "

"He is here, then, — in the house?"

"Why will you excite yourself in this way, when I tell you that all will most easily be arranged? The Brigadier only asks to see you, — to ascertain, in fact, that you are really ill, and unable to be removed — "

"To jail — to the common prison, eh?"

"Oh, I must not talk to you, if it irritates you in this fashion; indeed, there is now little more to say, and if you will just permit the Brigadier to come in for a second, everything is done."

"I'm ready for him," said I, in a tone that showed I needed no further information; and Cary left the room.

After about five minutes' waiting, in an almost intolerable impatience, the Brigadier, stooping his enormous bearskin to fully three feet, entered with four others, armed cap-à-pie, who drew up in a line behind him, and grounded their carbines with a clank that made the room shake. The Brigadier, I must tell you, was a very fine soldierlike fellow, and with fully half a dozen decorations hanging to his coat. It struck me that he was rather disappointed; he probably expected to see a man of colossal proportions and herculean strength, instead of the poor remnant of humanity that chicken broth and the lancet have left me. The room, too, seemed to fall below his expectations; for he threw his eyes around him without detecting any armory or offensive weapons, or, indeed, any means of resistance whatever.

"This is his Excellency?" said he at last, addressing Cary; and she nodded.

"Ask him his own name, Cary," said I. "I'm curious about it."

"My name," said he, sonorously, to her question, — "my name is Alessandro Lamporeccho;" and with that he gave the word to his people to face about, and away they marched with all the solemnity of a military movement. As the door closed behind them, however, I heard a few words uttered in whispers, and immediately afterwards the measured tread of a sentry slowly parading the lobby outside my room.

"That's another *formality*, Cary," said I, "is n't it?" She nodded for reply. "Tell them I detest ceremony, my dear," said I; "and — and" — I could n't keep down my passion — "and if they don't take that fellow away, I'll pitch him head and crop over the banisters." I tried to spring up, but back I fell, weak, and almost fainting. The sad truth came home to me at once that I had n't strength to face a baby; so I just turned my face to the wall, and sulked away to my heart's content. If I tell you how I spent that day, the same story will do for the rest of the week. I saw that they were all watching and waiting for some outbreak, of either my temper or my curiosity. They tried every means to tempt me into an inquiry of one kind or other. They dropped hints, in half-whispers, before me. They said twenty things to arouse anxiety, and even alarm, in me; but I resolved that if I passed my days there, I 'd starve them out: and so I did.

On the ninth day, when I was eating my breakfast, just as I had finished my mutton-chop, and was going to attack the eggs, Cary, in a half-laughing way, said, "Well, pappy, do you never intend to take the air again? The weather is now delightful, — that second season they call the summer of St. Joseph."

"Ain't I a prisoner?" said I. "I thought I had murdered somebody, and was sentenced for life to this chamber."

"How can you be so silly!" said she. "You know perfectly well how these foreigners make a fuss about everything, and exaggerate every trifle into a mock importance. Now, we are not in Ireland —"

"No," said I, "would to Heaven we were!"

"Well, perhaps I might echo the prayer without doing any great violence to my sincerity; but as we are not there, nor can we change the venue — is n't that the phrase? — to our own country, what if we just were to make the best of it, and suffer this matter to take its course here?"

"As how, Cary?"

"Simply by dressing yourself, and driving into Como. Your case will be heard on any morning you present yourself; and I am so convinced that the whole affair will be settled in five minutes that I am quite impatient it should be over."

I will not repeat all her arguments, some good and some bad, but every one of them dictated by that kind and affectionate spirit which, however her judgment incline, never deserts her. The end of it was, I got up, shaved, and dressed, and within an hour was skimming over the calm clear water towards the little city of Como.

Cary was with me, — she would come, — she said she knew she did me good; and it was true: but the scene itself — those grand, great mountains; those leafy glens, opening to the glassy lake, waveless and still; that glorious reach of blue sky, spanning from peak to peak of those Alpine ridges — all soothed and calmed me; and in the midst of such gigantic elements, I could not help feeling shame that such a reptile as I should mar the influence of this picture on my heart by petty passions and little fractious discontents unworthy of a sick schoolboy.

"Is n't it enough for you, K. I.," says I, "ay, and more than you deserve, just to live, and breathe, and have your being in such a bright and glorious world? If you were a poet, with what images would not these swooping mists, these fleeting shadows, people your imagination? What voices would you hear in the wind sighing through the olive groves, and dying in many a soft cadence along the grottoed shore? If a painter, what effects of sunlight and shadow are there to study? what tints of color, that, without nature to guarantee, you would never dare to venture on? But being neither, having neither gift nor talent, being simply one of those 'fruit consumers,' who bring back nothing to the common stock of mankind, and who can no more make my fellow-man wiser or better than I make myself taller or younger, is it not a matter of deep thankfulness that, in all my common-place of mind and thought, I too — even K. I. that I am — have an intense feeling of enjoyment in the contemplation of this scene? I could n't describe it like Shelley, nor paint it like Stanfield, but I'll back myself for a five-pound note to feel it with either of them." And there, let me tell you, Tom, is the real superiority of Nature over all her counterfeits. You need no study, no cultivation, no connoisseurship to appreciate her: her glorious works come home to the heart of the peasant, as, mist-begirt, he waits for sunrise on some highland waste, as well as to the Prince, who gazes on the swelling landscape of his own dominions. I could n't tell a Claude from a Canaletti, — I'm not sure that I don't like H. B. better than Albert Durer, — but I'd not surrender the heartfelt delight, the calm, intense, deep-souled gratitude I experience from the contemplation of a lovely landscape, to possess the Stafford gallery.

I was, then, in a far more peaceful and practicable frame of mind as we entered Como than when I quitted the villa.

I should like to have lingered a little in the old town itself, with its quaint little arched passages and curious architecture; but Cary advised me to nurse all my strength for the "Tribunal." I suppose it must be with some moral hope of discountenancing litigation that foreign Governments always make the Law Courts as dirty and disgusting as possible, pitch them in a filthy quarter, and surround them with every squalor. This one was a paragon of its kind, and for rags and ruffianly looks I never saw the equal of the company there assembled. I am not yet quite sure that the fellow who showed us the way did n't purposely mislead us; for we traversed a dozen dark corridors, and went up and went down more staircases than I have accomplished for the last six months. Now and then we stopped for a minute to interrogate somebody through a sliding pane in a kind of glass cage, and off we went again. At last we came to a densely crowded passage, making way through which, we entered a large hall with a vaulted roof, crammed with people, but who made room at the instance of a red-eyed, red-bearded little man in a black gown, that I now, to my horror and disgust, found out was my counsel, being already engaged by Lord George to defend me.

"This is treachery, Cary," whispered I, angrily.

"I know it is," said she, "and I 'm one of the traitors; but anything is better than to see you pine away your life in a sick-room."

This was neither the time nor place for much colloquy, as we now had to fight our way vigorously through the mob till we reached a row of seats where the bar were placed, and where we were politely told to be seated. Directly in front of us sat three ill-favored old fellows in black gowns and square black caps, modelled after those brown-paper helmets so popular with plasterers and stucco men in our country. I found it a great trial not to laugh every time I looked at them!

There was no case "on" at the moment, but a kind of wrangle was going forward about whose was to be the next hearing, in which I could hear my own name mingled. My lawyer, Signor Mastuccio, seemed to make a successful appeal in my favor; for the three old "plasterers" put up their eyeglasses, and stared earnestly at Cary, after which the chief of them nodded benignly, and said that the case of Giacomo Lamporeccho might be called; and accordingly, with a voice that might have raised the echoes of the Alps, a fellow screamed out that the "homicidio" — I have no need to translate the word — was then before the Court. If I only were to tell you, Tom, of the tiresome, tedious, and unmeaning formalities that followed, your case in listening would be scarcely more enviable than was my own while enduring them. All the preliminary proceedings were in writing, and a dirty little dog, with a vile odor of garlic about him, read some seventy pages of a manuscript which I was informed was the accusation against me. Then appeared another creature,— his twin brother in meanness and poverty, — who proved to be a doctor, the same who had professionally attended the wounded man, and who also read a memoir of the patient's sufferings and peril. These occupied the Court till it was nigh three o'clock, when, being concluded, Giacomo himself was called. I assure you, Tom, I gave a start when, instead of the large, fine, burly, well-bearded rascal with the Lablache voice, I beheld a pale, thin, weakly creature, with a miserable treble, inform the Court that he was Giacomo Lamporeccho.

Cary, who translated for me as he spoke, told me that he gave an account of our interview together, in which it would appear that my conduct was that of an outrageous maniac. He described me as accusing everybody of roguery and cheating,— calling the whole country a den of thieves, and the authorities their accomplices. He detailed his own mild remonstrances against my hasty judgment, and his calm appeals to my better reason. He dwelt long upon his wounded honor, and, what he felt still more deeply, the wounded honor of his nation; and at last he actually began to cry when his feelings got too much for him, at which the Court sobbed, and the bar sobbed, and the general audience, in a mixture of grief and menace, muttered the most signal vengeance against your humble servant.

I happened to be — a rare thing for me, latterly — in one of my old moods, when the ludicrous and absurd carry away all my sympathies; and faith, Tom, I laughed as heartily as ever I did in my life at the whole scene. "Are we coming to the wound yet, Cary," said I, "tell me that," for the fellow had now begun again.

"Yes, papa, he is describing it, and, by his account, it ought to have killed him."

"Egad," said I, "it will be the death of *me* with laughing;" and I shook till my sides ached.

"Does his Excellency know that he is in a Court of Justice?" said Plasterer No. 1.

"Tell him, my dear, that I quite forgot it. I fancied I was at a play, and enjoyed it much."

I believe Cary did n't translate me honestly, for the old fellow seemed appeased, and the case continued. I could now perceive that my atrocious conduct had evoked a very strong sentiment in the auditory, for there was a great rush forward to get a look at me, and they who were fortunate enough to succeed complimented me by a string of the most abusive and insulting epithets.

My advocate was now called on, and, seeing him rise, I just whispered to Cary, "Ask the judge if we may see the wound?"

"What does that question mean?" said the chief judge, imperiously. "Would the prisoner dare to insinuate that the wound has no existence?"

"You 've hit it," said I. "Tell him, Cary, that 's exactly what I mean."

"Has not the prisoner sworn to his sufferings," repeated he, "and the doctor made oath to the treatment?"

"They 're both a pair of lying scoundrels. Tell him so, Cary."

"You see him now. There is the man himself in his true colors, most illustrious and most ornate judges," exclaimed Giacomo, pointing to me with his finger, as I nearly burst with rage.

"Ah! che diavolo! che demonio infernale!" rang out amidst the waving crowd; and the looks bestowed on me from the bench seemed to give hearty concurrence to the opinion.

Now, Tom, a court of justice, be its locale ever so humble, and its procedure ever so simple, has always struck me as the very finest evidence of homage to civilization. There is something in the fact of men submitting, not only their worldly interests and their characters, but even their very passions, to the arbitration of their fellow-men, that is indescribably fine and noble, and shows — if we even wanted such a proof — that this corrupt nature of ours, in the midst of all its worst influences, has still some of that divine essence within, unsullied and untarnished. And just as I reverence this, do I execrate, with all my heart's indignation, a corrupt judicature. The governments who employ, and the people who tolerate them, are well worthy of each other.

Take all the vices that degrade a nation, " bray them in a mortar," and they 'll not eat so deep into the moral feeling of a people as a tainted administration of the law.

You may fancy that, in my passionate warmth, I have forgotten all about my individual case: no such thing. I have, however, rescued myself from the danger of an apoplexy by opening this safety-valve to my indignation. And now I cannot resume my narrative. No, Tom, " I have lost the scent," and all I can do is to bring you " in at the death." I was sentenced to pay seven hundred zwanzigers, — eightpences, — all the costs of the procedure, the doctor's bill, and the maintenance of Giacomo till his convalescence was completed. I appealed on the spot to an upper court, and the judgment was confirmed! I nearly burst with indignant anger, and asked my advocate if he had ever heard of such iniquity. He shrugged his shoulders, smiled slightly, and said, " The law is precarious in all countries."

" Yes, — but," said I, " the judges are not always corrupt. Now, that old president of the first court suggested every answer to the witness — "

" Vincenzio Lamporeccho is a shrewd man — "

" What! How do you call him? Is he anything to our friend Giacomo? "

"He is his father!"

"And the Brigadier who arrested me?"

"Is his brother. The junior judge of the Appeal Court, Luigi Lamporeccho, is his first cousin."

I did n't ask more questions, Tom. Fancy a country where your butler is brother to the chief baron, and sues you for wages in the Court of Exchequer!

"And you, Signor Mastuccio," said I. "I hope I have not exposed you to the vengeance of this powerful family by your zeal in my behalf?"

"Not in the least," said he; "my mother was a Lamporeccho herself."

Now, Tom, I think I need not take any more pains to explain the issue of my lawsuit; and here I'll leave it.

My parting benediction to the Court was brief: "Good-bye, old gentlemen. I'm glad you have the Austrians here to bully you; and not sorry that *you* are here to assassinate *them*." This speech was overheard by some learned linguist in court, and on the same evening I received an intimation to quit the Imperial dominions within twenty-four hours. Tiverton was for going up to Milan to Radetzky, or somebody else, and having it all "put straight," as he calls it; but I would not hear of this.

"We 'll write to the Ambassador at Vienna?" said he.

"Nor that either," said I.

"To the 'Times,' then."

"Not a word of it."

"You don't mean to say," said he, "that you'll put up with this treatment, and that you'll lower the name of Briton before these foreigners by such a tame submission?"

"My view of the case is a very simple one, my Lord," said I; "and it is this. We travelling English are very prone to two faults; one is, a bullying effort to oppose ourselves to the laws of the countries we visit; and then, when we fail, a whining appeal to some minister or consul to take up our battle. The first is stupid, the latter is contemptible. The same feeling that would prevent me trespassing on the hospitality of an unwilling host will rescue me from the indignity of remaining in a country where my presence is distasteful to the rulers of it."

"Such a line of conduct," said he, "would expose us to insult from one end of Europe to the other."

"And if it teach us to stay at home, and live under laws that we understand, the price is not too high for the benefit."

He blustered away about what he would n't do in the Press, and in his "place" in Parliament; but what 's the use of all that? Will England go to war for Kenny James Dodd? No. Well, then, by no other argument is the foreigner assailable. Tell the Austrian or the Russian Government that the company at the "Freemasons'" dinner were shocked, and the ladies at Exeter Hall were outraged at their cruelty, and they 'll only laugh at you. We can't send a fleet to Vienna; nor — we would n't if we could.

I did n't tell Lord George, but to you, in confidence, Tom, I will say, I think we have — if we liked it — a grand remedy for all these cases. Do you know that it was thinking of Tim Ryan, the rat-catcher at Kelly's mills, suggested it to me. Whenever Tim came up to a house with his traps and contrivances, if the family said they did n't need him, "for they had no rats," he 'd just loiter about the place till evening, — and, whatever he did, or how he did it, one thing was quite sure, they had never to make the same complaint again! Now, my notion is, whenever we have any grudge with a foreign State, don't begin to fit out fleets or armaments, but just send a steamer off to the nearest port with one of the refugees aboard. I 'd keep Kossuth at Malta, always ready; Louis Blanc and Ledru Rollin at Jersey; Don Miguel and Don Carlos at Gibraltar; and have Mazzini and some of the rest cruising about for any service they may be wanted on. In that way, Tom, we 'd keep these Governments in order, and, like Tim Ryan, be turning our vermin to a good account besides!

I thought that Mrs. D. and Mary Anne displayed a degree of attachment to this place rather surprising, considering that I have heard of nothing but its inconvenience till this moment, when we are ordered to quit it. Now, however, they suddenly discover it to be healthful, charming, and economical. I have questioned Cary as to the secret of this change, but she does not understand it. She knows that Lord George received a large packet by the post this morning, and instantly hurried off to communicate its contents to Mary Anne. By George! Tom, I have come to the notion that to rule a family of four people, one ought to have a "detective officer" attached to the household. Every day or so, something puzzling and inexplicable occurs, the meaning of which never turns up till you find yourself duped, and then it is too late to complain. Now, this same letter Cary speaks of is at this very instant exercising a degree of influence here, and I am to remain in ignorance of the cause till I can pick it out from the effect. This, too, is another blessed result of foreign travel! When we lived at home the incidents of our daily life were few, and not very eventful; they were circumscribed within narrow limits, and addressed themselves to the feelings of every one amongst us. Concealment would have been absurd, even were it possible; but the truth was, we were all so engaged with the same topics and the same spirit, that we talked of them constantly, and grew to think that outside the little circle of ourselves the world was a mere wilderness. To be sure, all this sounds very narrow-minded, and all that. So it does; but let me tell you, it conduces greatly to happiness and contentment.

Now, here, we have so many irons in the fire, some one or other of us is always burning his fingers!

I continue to be very uneasy about James. Not a line have we had from him, and he 's now several weeks gone! I wrote to Vickars, but have not yet heard from him in reply. Cary endeavors to persuade me that it is only his indolent, careless habit is in fault; but I can see that she is just as uncomfortable and anxious as myself.

You will collect from the length of this document that I am quite myself again; and, indeed, except a little dizziness in my head after dinner, and a tendency to sleep, I 'm all right. Not that I complain of the latter, — far from it, Tom. Sancho Panza himself never blessed the inventor of it more fervently than I do.

Sometimes, however, I think that it is the newspapers are not so amusing as they used to be. The racy old bitterness of party spirit is dying out, and all the spicy drollery and epigrammatic fun of former days gone with it. It strikes me, too, Tom, that "Party," in the strong sense, never can exist again amongst us. Party is essentially the submission of the many to the few; and so long as the few were pre-eminent in ability and tactical skill, nothing was more salutary. Walpole, Pelham, Pitt, and Fox stood immeasurably above the men and the intelligence of their time. Their statecraft was a science of which the mass of their followers were totally ignorant, and the crew never dreamt of questioning the pilot as to the course he was about to take. Whereas now — although by no means deficient in able and competent men to rule us — the body of the House is filled by others very little their inferiors. Old Babington used to say "that between a good physician and a bad one, there was only the difference between a pound and a guinea." In the same way, there is not a wider interval now between the Right Honorable Secretary on the Treasury Bench and the Honorable Member below him. Education is widely disseminated, — the intercourse of club life is immense, — opportunities of knowledge abound on every hand, — the Press is a great popular instructor; and, above all, the temper and tendency of the age favors labor of every kind. Idleness is not in vogue with any class of the whole community. What chance, then, of any man, no matter how great and gifted he be, imposing, his opinions — *as such* — upon the world of politics! A minister, or his opponent, may get together a number of supporters for a particular measure, just as you or I could muster a mob at an election or a fair; but there would be no more discipline in the one case than in the other. They'd come now, and go when they liked; and any chance of reducing such "irregulars" to the habits of an army would be downright impossible!

There is another cause of dulness, too, in the newspapers. All the accidents — a most amusing column it used to be — are now entirely caused by railroads; and there is a shocking sameness about them. They were "shunting" wagons across the line when the express came up, or the pointsman did n't turn the switch, or the fog obscured the danger signal. With these three explanations, some hundreds of human beings are annually smashed, smothered, and scalded, and the survivors not a whit more provident than before.

Cruel assaults upon women — usually the wives of the ruffians themselves — are, I perceive, becoming a species of popular custom in England. Every "Times" I see has its catalogue of these atrocities; and I don't perceive that five shilling fines nor even three weeks at the treadmill diminishes the number. One of the railroad companies announces that it will not hold itself responsible for casualties, nor indemnify the sufferers. Don't you think that we might borrow a hint from them, and insert some cause of the same kind into the marriage ceremony, and that the woman should know all her "liabilities" without any hope of appeal? Ah! Tom Purcell, all our naval reviews, and industrial exhibitions, and boastful "leading" articles about our national greatness come with a very ill grace in the same broad sheet with these degrading police histories. Must savage ferocity accompany us as we grow in wealth and power? If so, then I 'd rather see us a third-rate power to-morrow than rule the world at the cost of such disgrace!

Ireland, I see, jogs on just as usual, wrangling away. They can't even agree whether the potatoes have got the rot or not. Some of the papers, too, are taking up the English cry of triumph over the downfall of our old squirearchy; but it does not sound well from *them*. To be sure, some of the new proprietors would seem not only to have taken our estates, but tasted the Blarney-stone besides; and one, a great man too, has been making a fine speech with his "respected friend, the Reverend Mr. O'Shea," on his right hand, and vowing that he 'll never turn out anybody that pays the rent, nor dispossess a good tenant! The stupid infatuation of these English makes me sick, Tom. Why, with all their self-sufficiency, can't they see that we understand our own people better than they do? We know the causes of bad seasons and short harvests better; we know the soil better, and the climate better, and if we have n't been good landlords, it is simply because we could n't afford it. Now, they are rich, and can afford it; and if they have bought up Irish estates to get the rents out of them, I 'd like to know what 's to be the great benefit of the change. "Pay up the arrears," says I; but if my Lord Somebody from England says the same, I think there 's no use in selling *me* out, and taking *him* in my place. And this brings me to asking when I 'm to get another remittance? I *am* thinking seriously of retrenchment; but first, Tom, one must have something to retrench upon. You must possess a salary before you can stand "stoppages." Of course we mean "to come home again." I have n't heard that the Government have selected me for a snug berth in the Colonies; so be assured that you 'll see us all back in Dodsborough before —

Mrs. D. had been looking over my shoulder, Tom, while I was writing the last line, and we have just had what she calls an "explanation," but what ordinary grammarians would style — a row. She frankly and firmly declares that I may try Timbuctoo or the Gambia if I like, but back to Ireland she positively will not go! She informs me, besides, that she is quite open to an arrangement about a separate maintenance. But my property, Tom, is like poor Jack Heffernan's goose, — it would n't bear carving, so he just helped himself to it all! And, as I said to Mrs. D., two people may get some kind of shelter under one umbrella, but they 'll infallibly be wet through if they cut it in two, and each walk off with his half. "If you were a bit of a gentleman," said she, "you 'd give it all to the lady." That 's what I got for my illustration.

But now that I 'm safe once more, I repeat, you shall certainly see us back in our old house again, and which, for more reasons than I choose to detail here, we ought never to have quitted.

I have been just sent for to a cabinet council of the family, who are curious to know whither we are going from this; and as I wish to appear prepared with a plan, and am not strong in geography, I 'll take a look at the map before I go. I 've hit it, Tom, — Parma. Parma will do admirably. It 's near, and it 's never visited by strangers. There 's a gallery of pictures to look at, and, at the worst, plenty of cheese to eat. Tourists may talk and grumble as they will about the dreary aspect of these small capitals, without trade and commerce, with a beggarly Court and a ruined nobility, — to me they are a boon from Heaven. You can always live in them for a fourth of the cost of elsewhere. The head inn is your own, just as the Piazza is, and the park at the back of the palace. It goes hard but you can amuse yourself poking about into old churches, and peeping into shrines and down wells, pottering into the market-place, and watching the bargaining for eggs and onions; and when these fail, it 's good fun to mark the discomfiture of your womankind at being shut up in a place where there 's neither opera nor playhouse, — no promenade, no regimental band, and not even a milliner's shop.

From all I can learn, Parma will suit me perfectly; and now I 'm off to announce my resolve to the family. Address me there, Tom, and with a sufficiency of cash to move further when necessary.

I 'm this moment come back, and not quite satisfied with what I 've done. Mrs. D. and Mary Anne approve highly of my choice. They say nothing could be better. Some of us must be mistaken, and I fervently trust that it may not be

Your sincere friend,
KENNY JAMES DODD.

LETTER XIV.

JAMES DODD TO LORD GEORGE TIVERTON, M.P.

Cour de Vienne, Mantua.

My dear George, — I 've only five minutes to give you; for the horses are at the door, and we 're to start at once. I have a great budget for you when we meet; for we 've been over the Tyrol and Styria, spent ten days at Venice, and "done" Verona and the rest of them, — John Murray in hand.

We 're now bound for Milan, where I want you to meet us on our arrival, with an invitation from my mother, asking Josephine to the villa. I 've told her that the note is already there awaiting her, and for mercy' sake let there be no disappointment.

This dispensation is a horrible tedious affair; but I hope we shall have it now within the present month. The interval *she* desires to spend in perfect retirement, so that the villa is exactly the place, and the attention will be well timed.

Of course they ought to receive her as well as possible. Mary Anne, I know, requires no hint; but try and persuade the governor to trim himself up a little, and if you could make away with that old flea-bitten robe he calls his dressing-gown, you 'd do the State some service. Look to the servants, too, and smarten them up; a cold perspiration breaks over me when I think of Betty Cobb!

I rely on you to think of and provide for everything, and am ever your attached friend,

James Dodd.

I changed my last five-hundred-pound note at Venice, so that I must bring the campaign to a close immediately.

LETTER XV.

MRS. DODD TO MRS. MARY GALLAGHER, DODSBOROUGH.

PARMA, THE "COUR DE PARME."

MY DEAR MOLLY, — When I wrote to you last, we were living, quietly, it is true, and unostensively, but happily, on the Lake of Comus, and there we might have passed the whole autumn, had not K. I., with his usual thoughtfulness for the comfort of his family, got into a row with the police, and had us sent out of the country.

No less, my dear! Over the frontier in twenty-four hours was the word; and when Lord George wanted to see some of the great people about it, or even make a stir in the newspapers, he would n't let him. "No," said he, "the world is getting tired of Englishmen that are wronged by foreign governments. They say, naturally enough, that there must be some fault in ourselves, if we are always in trouble, this way; and, besides, I would not take fifty pounds, and have somebody get up in the House and move for all the correspondence in the case of Mr. Dodd, so infamously used by the authorities in Lombardy." Them 's his words, Molly; and when we told him that it was a fine way of getting known and talked about in the world, what was his answer do you think? "I don't want notoriety; and if I did, I 'd write a letter to the 'Times,' and say it was I that defended Hougoumont, in the battle of Waterloo. There seems to be a great dispute about it, and I don't see why I could n't put in my claim."

I suppose after that, Molly, there will be very little doubt that his head is n't quite right, for he was no more at Waterloo than you or me.

It was a great shock to us when we got the order to march; for on that same morning the post brought us a letter from James, or, at least, it came to Lord George, and with news that made me cry with sheer happiness for full two hours after. I was n't far wrong, Molly, when I told you that it 's little need he 'd have of learning or a profession. Launch him out well in life was my words to K. I. Give him ample means to mix in society and make friends, and see if he won't turn it to good account. I know the boy well; and that 's what K. I. never did, — never could.

See if I 'm not right, Mary Gallagher. He went down to the baths of — I 'm afraid of the name, but it sounds like "Humbug," as well as I can make out — and what does he do but make acquaintance with a beautiful young creature, a widow of nineteen, rolling in wealth, and one of the first families in France!

How he did it, I can't tell; no more than where he got all the money he spent there on horses and carriages and dinners, and elegant things that he ordered for her from Paris. He passed five weeks there, courting her, I suppose; and then away they went, rambling through Germany, and over the mountains, down to Venice. She in her own travelling-carriage, and James driving a team of four beautiful grays of his own; and then meeting when they stopped at a town, but all with as much discretion as if it was only politeness between them. At last he pops the question, Molly; and it turns out that she has no objection in life, only that she must get a dispensation from the Pope, because she was promised and betrothed to the King of Naples, or one of his brothers; and though she married another, she never got what they call a Bull of release.

This is the hardest thing in the world to obtain; and if it was n't that she has a Cardinal an uncle, she might never get it. At all events, it will take time, and meanwhile she ought to live in the strictest retirement. To enable her to do this properly, and also by way of showing her every attention, James wrote to have an invitation ready for her to come down to the villa and stay with us on a visit.

By bad luck, my dear, it was the very morning this letter came, K. I. had got us all ordered away! What was to be done, was now the question; we dare n't trust him with the secret till she was in the house, for we knew well he 'd refuse to ask her,— say he could n't afford the expense, and that we were all sworn to ruin him. We left it to Lord George to manage; and he, at last, got K. I. to fix on Parma for a week or two, one of the quietest towns in Italy, and where you never see a coach in the streets, nor even a well-dressed creature out on Sunday. K. I. was delighted with it all; saving money is the soul of him, and he never thinks of anything but when he can make a hard bargain. What he does with his income, Molly, the saints alone can tell; but I suspect that there 's some sinners, too, know a trifle about it; and the day will come when I 'll have the proof! Lord G. sent for the landlord's tariff, and it was reasonable enough. Rooms were to be two zwanzigers — one-and-fourpence — apiece; breakfast, one; dinner, two zwanzigers; tea, half a one; no charge for wine of the place; and if we stayed any time, we were to have the key of a box at the opera.

K. I. was in ecstasy. "If I was to live here five or six years," says he, "and pay nobody, my affairs would n't be so much embarrassed as they are now!"

"If you 'd cut off your encumbrances, Mr. Dodd," says I, "that would save something."

"My what?" said he, flaring up, with a face like a turkey-cock.

But I was n't going to dispute with him, Molly; so I swept out of the room, and threw down a little china flower-pot just to stop him.

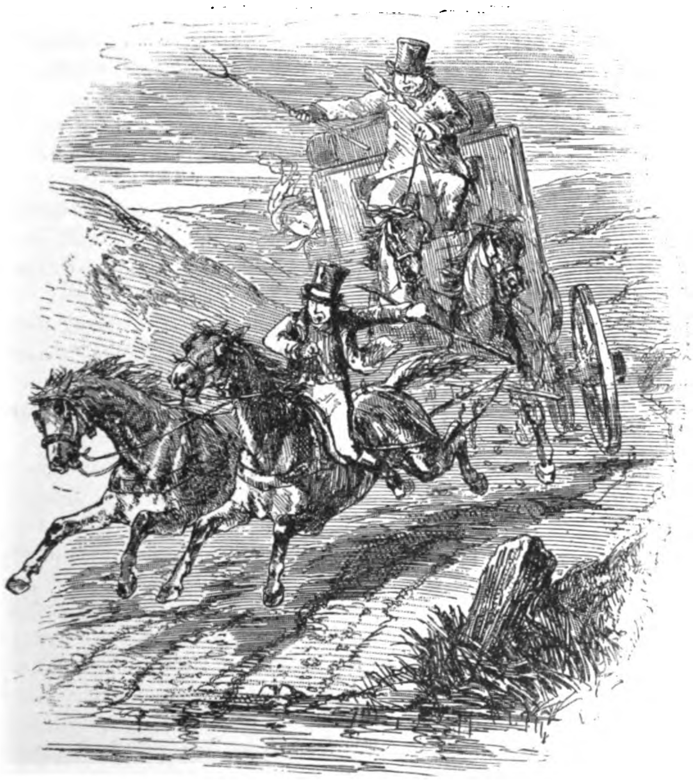
The same day we started, and arrived here at the hotel, the "Cour de Parme," by midnight; it was a tiresome journey, and K. I. made it worse, for he was fighting with somebody or other the whole time; and Lord George was not with us, for he had gone off to Milan to meet James; and Mr. D. was therefore free to get into as many scrapes as he pleased. I must say, he did n't neglect the opportunity, for he insulted the passport people and the custom-house officers, and the man at the bridge of boats, and the postmasters and postilions everywhere. "I did n't come here to be robbed," said he everywhere; and he got a few Italian words for "thief," "rogue," "villain," and so on; and if I saw one, I saw ten knives drawn on him that blessed day. He would n't let Cary translate for him, but sat on the box himself, and screamed out his directions like a madman. This went on till we came to a place called San Donino, and there — it was the last stage from Parma — they told him he could n't have any horses, though he saw ten of them standing all ready harnessed and saddled in the stable. I suppose they explained to him the reason, and that he did n't understand it, for they all got to words together, and it was soon who 'd scream loudest amongst them.

At last K. I. cried out, "Come down, Paddy, and see if we can't get four of these beasts to the carriage, and we 'll not ask for a postilion."

Down jumps Paddy out of the rumble, and rushes after him into the stable. A terrible uproar followed this, and soon after the stable people, helpers, ostlers, and postboys, were seen running out of the door for their lives, and K. I. and Paddy after them, with two rack-staves they had torn out of the manger. "Leave them to me," says K. I.; "leave them to me, Paddy, and do you go in for the horses; put them to, and get a pair of reins if you can; if not, jump up on one of the leaders, and drive away."

If he was bred and born in the place, he could not have known it better, for he came out the next minute with a pair of horses, that he fastened to the carriage in a trice, and then hurried back for two more, that he quickly brought out and put to also. "There 's no whip to be found," says he, "but this wattle will do for the leaders; and if your honor will stir up the wheelers, here 's a nice little handy stable fork to do it with." With this Paddy sprung into the saddle, K. I. jumped up to the box, and off they set, tearing down the street like mad. It was pitch dark, and of course neither of them knew the road; but K. I. screamed out, "Keep in the middle, Paddy, and don't pull up for any one." We went through the village at a full gallop, the people all yelling and shouting after us; but at the end of the street there were two roads, and Paddy cried out, "Which way now?" "Take the widest, if you can see it," screamed out K. I.; and away he went, at a pace that made the big travelling-carriage bump and swing like a boat at sea.

We soon felt we were going down a dreadful steep, for the carriage was all but on top of the horses, and K. I. kept screaming out, "Keep up the pace, Paddy. Make them go, or we 'll all be smashed." Just as he said that I heard a noise, like the sea in a storm, — a terrible sound of rushing, dashing, roaring water; then a frightful yell from Paddy, followed by a plunge. "In a river, by ——!" roared out K. I.; and as he said it, the coach gave a swing over to one side, then righted, then swung back again, and with a crash that I thought smashed it to atoms, fell over on one side into the water.



"All right," said K. I.; "I turned the leaders short round and saved us!" and with that he began tearing and dragging us out. I fell into a swoon after this, and know no more of what happened. When I came to myself, I was in a small hut, lying on a bed of chestnut leaves, and the place crowded with peasants and postilions.

"There 's no mischief done, mamma," said Cary. "Paddy swam the leaders across beautifully, for the traces snapped at once, and, except the fright, we 're nothing the worse."

"Where 's Mary Anne?" said I.

"Talking to the gentleman who assisted us — outside — some friend of Lord George's, I believe, for he is with him."

Just as she said this, in comes Mary Anne with Lord George and his friend.

"Oh, mamma," says she, in a whisper, "you don't know who it is, — the Prince himself."

"Ah, been and done it, marm," said he, addressing me with his glass in his eye.

"What, sir?" said I.

"Taken a 'header,' they tell me, eh? Glad there 's no harm done."

"His Serene Highness hopes you 'll not mind it, mamma," said Mary Anne.

"Oh, is *that* it?" said I.

"Yes, mamma. Is n't he delightful, — so easy, so familiar, and so truly kind also."

"He has just ordered up two of his own carriages to take us on."

By this time his Serene Highness had lighted his cigar, and, seating himself on a log of wood in the corner of the hut, began smoking. In the intervals of the puffs he said, —

"Old gent took a wrong turning — should have gone left — water very high, besides, from the late rains — regular smash — wish I 'd seen it."

K. I. now joined us, all dripping, and hung round with weeds and water-lilies, — as Lord George said, like an ancient river-god. "In any other part of the globe," said he, "there would have been a warning of some kind or other stuck up here to show there was n't a bridge; but exactly as I said yesterday, these little beggarly States, with their petty governments, are the curse of Europe."

"Hush, papa, for mercy' sake," whispered Mary Anne; "this is the Prince himself; it is his Serene Highness — "

"Oh, the devil!" said he.

"My friend, Mr. Dodd, Prince," said Lord George, presenting him with a sly look, as much as to say, "the same as I told you about."

"Dodd — Dodd — fellow of that name hanged, was n't there?" said the Prince.

"Yes, your Highness; he was a Dr. Dodd, who committed forgery, and for whom the very greatest public sympathy was felt at the time," said K. I.

"Your father, eh?"

"No, your Highness, no relation whatever."

"Won't have him at any price, George," said the Prince, with a wink. "Never draw a weed, miss?" said he, turning to Mary Anne.

I don't know what she said, but it must have been smart, for his Serene Highness laughed heartily and said, —

"Egad, I got it there, Tiverton!"

In due time a royal carriage arrived. The Prince himself handed us in, and we drove off with one of the Court servants on the box. To be sure, we forgot that we had left K. I. behind; but Mary Anne said he 'd have no difficulty in finding a conveyance, and the distance was only a few miles.

"I wish his Serene Highness had not taken away Lord George," said Mary Anne; "he insists upon his going with him to Venice."

"For my part," said Cary, "though greatly obliged to the Prince for his opportune kindness to ourselves, I am still more grateful to him for this service."

On that, my dear, we had a dispute that lasted till we got to our journey's end; for though the girls never knew what it was to disagree at home in Dodsborough, here, abroad, Cary's jealousy is such that she cannot control herself, and says at times the most cruel and unfeeling things to her sister.

At last we got to the end of this wearisome day, and found ourselves at the door of the inn. The Court servant said something to the landlord, and immediately the whole household turned out to receive us; and the order was given to prepare the "Ambassador's suite of apartments for us."

"This is the Prince's doing," whispered Mary Anne in my ear. "Did you ever know such a piece of good fortune?"

The rooms were splendid, Molly; though a little gloomy when we first got in, for all the hangings were of purple velvet, and the pictures on the walls were dark and black, so that, though we had two lamps in our saloon and above a dozen candles, you could not see more than one-half the length of it.

I never saw Mary Anne in such spirits in my life. She walked up and down, admiring everything, praising everything; then she'd sit down to the piano and play for a few minutes, and then spring up and waltz about the room like a mad thing. As for Cary, I did n't know what became of her till I found that she had been downstairs with the landlord, getting him to send a conveyance back for her father, quite forgetting, as Mary Anne said, that any fuss about the mistake would only serve to expose us. And there, Molly, once for all, is the difference between the two girls! The one has such a knowledge of life and the world, that she never makes a blunder; and the other, with the best intentions, is always doing something wrong!

We waited supper for K. I. till past one o'clock; but, with his usual selfishness and disregard of others, he never came till it was nigh three, and then made such a noise as to wake up the whole house. It appeared, too, that he missed the coach that was sent to meet him, and he and Paddy Byrne came the whole way on foot! Let him do what he will, he has a knack of bringing disgrace on his family! The fatigue and wet feet, and his temper more than either, brought back the gout on him, and he did n't get up till late in the afternoon. We were in the greatest anxiety to tell him about James; but there was no saying what humor he'd be in, and how he'd take it. Indeed, his first appearance did not augur well. He was cross with everything and everybody. He said that sleeping on that grand bed with the satin hangings was like lying in state after death, and that our elegant drawing-room was about as comfortable as a cathedral.

He got into a little better temper when the landlord came up with the bill of fare, and to consult him about the dinner.

"Egad!" said he, "I've ordered fourteen dishes; so I don't think they'll make much out of the two zwanzigers a head!" Out of decency he had to order champagne, and a couple of bottles of Italian wine of a very high quality. "It's like all my economy," says he; "five shillings for a horse, and a pound to get him shod!"

We saw it was best to wait till dinner was over before we spoke to him; and, indeed, we were right, for he dined very heartily, finished the two bottles every glass, and got so happy and comfortable that Mary Anne sat down to the piano to sing for him.

"Thank you, my darling," said he, when she was done. "I've no doubt that the song is a fine one, and that you sung it well, but I can't follow the words, nor appreciate the air. I like something that touches me either with an old recollection, or by some suggestion for the future; and if you'd try and remember the 'Meeting of the Waters,' or 'Where's the Slave so lowly'—"

"I'm afraid, sir, I cannot gratify you," said she; and it was all she could do to get out of the room before he heard her sobbing.

"What's the matter, Jemi," said he, "did I say anything wrong? Is Molly angry with me?"

"Will you tell me," said I, "when you ever said anything right? Or do you do anything from morning till night but hurt the feelings and dance upon the tenderest emotions of your whole family? I've submitted to it so long," said I, "that I have no heart left in me to complain; but now that you drive me to it, I'll tell you my mind;" and so I did, Molly, till he jumped up at last, put on his hat, and rushed downstairs into the street. After which I went to my room, and cried till bedtime! As poor Mary Anne said to me, "There was a refined cruelty in that request of papa's I can never forget;" nor is it to be expected she should!

The next morning at breakfast he was in a better humor, for the table was covered with delicacies of every kind, fruit and liqueurs besides. "Not dear at eightpence, Jemi," he'd say, at every time he filled his plate. "Just think the way one is robbed by servants, when you see what can be had for a 'zwanziger;'" and he made Cary take down a list of the things, just to send to the "Times," and show how the English hotels were cheating the public.

We saw that this was a fine opportunity to tell him about James, and so Mary Anne undertook the task. "And so he never went to London at all," he kept repeating all the while. No matter what she said about the Countess, and her fortune, and her great connections; nothing came out of his lips but the same words.

"Don't you perceive," said I, at last, for I could n't bear it any longer, "that he did better, — that the boy took a shorter and surer road in life than a shabby place under the Crown!"

"May be so," said he, with a deep sigh, — "may be so! but I ought to be excused if I don't see at a glance how any man makes his fortune by marriage!"

I knew that he meant that for a provocation, Molly, but I bit my lips and said nothing.

We then explained to him that we had sent off a note to the Countess, asking her to pass a few weeks with us, and were in hourly expectation of her arrival.

He gave another heavy sigh, and drank off a glass of Curaçoa.

Mary Anne went on about our good luck in finding such a capital hotel, so cheap and in such a sweet retired spot, — just the very thing the Countess would like.

"Never went to London at all!" muttered K. I., for he could n't get his thoughts out of the old track. And, indeed, though we were all talking to him for more than an hour afterwards, it was easy to see that he was just standing still on the same spot as before. I don't ever remember passing a day of such anxiety as that, for every distant noise of wheels, every crack of a postilion's whip, brought us to the window to see if they were coming. We delayed dinner till seven o'clock, and put K. I.'s watch back, to persuade him it was only five; we loitered and lingered over it as long as we could, but no sight nor sound was there of their coming.

"Tell Paddy to fetch my slippers, Molly," said K. I., as we got into the drawing-room.

"Oh, papa! impossible," said she; "the Countess may arrive at any moment."

"Think of his never going to London at all," said he, with a groan.

I almost cried with spite, to see a man so lost to every sentiment of proper pride, and even dead to the prospects of his own children!

"Don't you think I might have a cigar?" said he.

"Is it here, papa?" said Mary Anne. "The smell of tobacco would certainly disgust the Countess."

"He thinks it would be more flattering to receive her into all the intimacy of the family," said I, "and see us without any disguise."

"Egad, then," said he, bitterly, "she 's come too late for *that;* she should have made our acquaintance before we began vagabondizing over Europe, and pretending to fifty things we 've no right to!"

"Here she is, — here they are!" screamed Mary Anne at this moment; and, with a loud noise like thunder, the heavy carriage rolled under the arched gateway, while crack — crack — crack went the whips, and the big bell of the hall began ringing away furiously.

"*I'm* off, at all events," said K. I.; and snatching one of the candles off the table, he rushed out of the room as hard as he could go.

I had n't more than time to put my cap straight on my head, when I heard them on the stairs; and then, with a loud bang of the folding-doors, the landlord himself ushered them into the room. She was leaning on James's arm, but the minute she saw me, she rushed forward and kissed my hand! I never was so ashamed in my life, Molly. It was making me out such a great personage at once, that I thought I 'd have fainted at the very notion. As to Mary

Anne, they were in each other's arms in a second, and kissed a dozen times. Cary, however, with a coldness that I 'll never forgive her for, just shook hands with her, and then turned to embrace James a second time.

While Mary Anne was taking off her shawl and her bonnet, I saw that she was looking anxiously about the room.

"What is it?" said I to Mary Anne, — "what does she want?" "She 's asking where 's the Prince; she means papa," whispered Mary Anne to me; and then, in a flash, I saw the way James represented us. "Tell her, my dear," said I, "that the Prince was n't very well, and has gone to bed." But she was too much engaged with us all to ask more about him, and we all sat down to tea, the happiest party ever you looked at. I had time now to look at her; and really, Molly, I must allow, she was the handsomest creature I ever beheld. She was a kind of a Spanish beauty, brown, and with jet-black eyes and hair, but a little vermilion on her cheeks, and eyelashes that threw a shadow over the upper part of her face. As to her teeth, when she smiled, — I thought Mary Anne's good, but they were nothing in comparison. When she caught me looking at her, she seemed to guess what was passing in my mind, for she stooped down and kissed my hand twice or thrice with rapture.

It was a great loss to me, as you may suppose, that I could n't speak to her, nor understand what she said to me; but I saw that Mary Anne was charmed with her, and even Cary — cold and distant as she was at first — seemed very much taken with her afterwards.

When tea was over, James sat down beside me, and told me everything. "If the governor will only behave handsomely for a week or two," said he, — "I ask no more, — that lovely creature and four thousand a year are all my own." He went on to show me that we ought to live in a certain style — not looking too narrowly into the cost of it — while she was with us. "She can't stay after the fourteenth," said he, "for her uncle the Cardinal is to be at Pisa that day, and she must be there to meet him; so that, after all, it 's only three weeks I 'm asking for, and a couple of hundred pounds will do it all. As for me," said he, "I 'm regularly aground, — have n't a ten-pound note remaining, and had to sell my 'drag' and my four grays at Milan, to get money to come on here."

He then informed me that her saddle-horses would arrive in a day or two, and that we should immediately provide others, to enable him and the girls to ride out with her. "She is used to every imaginable luxury," said he, "and has no conception that want of means could be the impediment to having anything one wished for."

I promised him to do my best with his father, Molly: but you may guess what a task that was; for, say what I could, the only remark I could get out of him was, "It 's very strange that he never went to London."

After all, Molly, I might have spared myself all my fatigue and all my labor, if I had only had the common-sense to remember what he was, — what he is, — ay, and what he will be — to the end of the chapter. He was n't well in the room with her the next morning, when I saw the old fool looking as soft and as sheepish at her as if he was making love himself. I own to you, Molly, I think she encouraged it. She had that French way with her, that seems to say, "Look as long as you like, and I don't mind it;" and so he did, — and even after breakfast I caught him peeping under the "Times" at her foot, which, I must say, was beautifully shaped and small; not but that the shoe had a great deal to say to it.

"I hope you 're pleased, Mr. Dodd?" said I, as I passed behind his chair.

"Yes," said he; "the funds is rising."

"I mean with the prospect," said I.

"Yes," said he; "we 'll be all looking up presently."

"Better than looking down," said I, "you old fool!"

I could n't help it, Molly, if it was to have spoiled everything, — the words would come out.

He got very red in the face, Molly, but said nothing, and so I left him to his own reflections. And it is what I'm now going to do with yourself, seeing that I 've come to the end of all my news, and carefully jotted down everything that has occurred here for your benefit. Four days have now passed over, and they don't seem like as many hours, though the place itself has not got many amusements.

The young people ride out every morning on horseback, and rarely come back until time to dress for dinner. Then we all meet; and I must say a more elegant display I never witnessed! The table covered with plate, and beautiful colored glass globes filled with flowers. The girls in full dress, — for the Countess comes down as if she was going to a Court, and wears diamond combs in her head, and a brooch of the same, as large as a cheese-plate. I too do my best to make a suitable appearance, — in crimson velvet and a spangled turban, with a deep fall of gold fringe, — and, except the "Prince," — as we call K. I., — we are all fit to receive the Emperor of Russia.

In the evening we have music and a game of cards, except on the opera nights, which we never miss; and then, with a nice warm supper at twelve o'clock, Molly, we close as pleasant a day as you could wish. Of course I can't tell you much more about the Countess, for I'm unable to talk to her, but she and Mary Anne are never asunder; and, though Cary still plays cold and retired, she can't help calling her a lovely creature.

It seems there is some new difficulty about the dispensation; and the Cardinal requires her to do "some meritorious works," I think they call them, before he'll ask for it. But if ever there was a saintly young creature, it is herself; and I hear she's up at five o'clock every morning just to attend first mass.

Here they are now, coming up the stairs, and I have n't more than time to seal this, and write myself

Your attached friend,

JEMIMA DODD.

Mary Anne begs you will tell Kitty Doolan that she has not been able to write to her, with all the occupation she has lately had, but will take the very first moment to send her at least a few lines. As James's good luck will soon be no secret, you may tell it to Kitty, and I think it won't be thrown away on her, as I suspect she was making eyes at him herself, though she might be his mother!

LETTER XVI.

MISS MARY ANNE DODD TO MISS DOOLAN, OF BALLYDOOLAN.

PARMA.

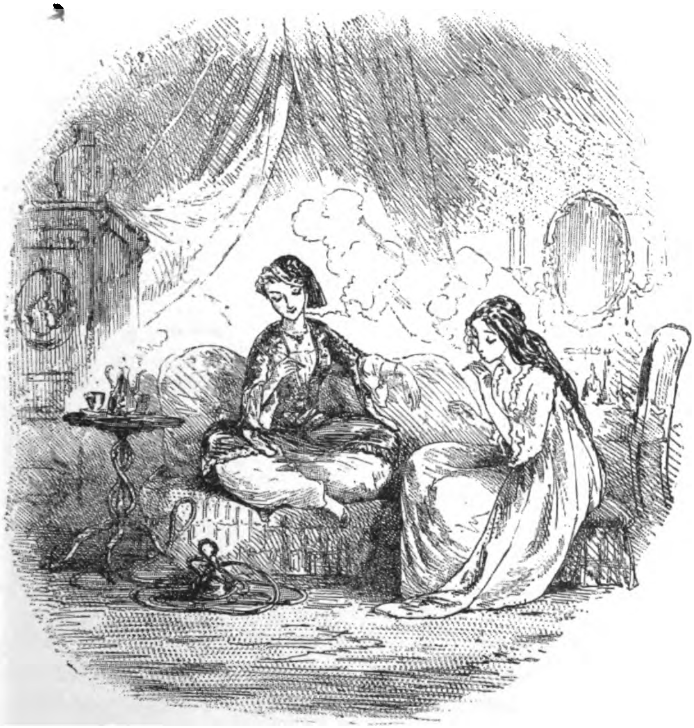
DEAREST KITTY, — It is but seldom I have to bespeak your indulgence on the score of my brevity, but I must do so now, overwhelmed as I am with occupation, and scarcely a moment left me that I can really call my own. Mamma's letter to old Molly will have explained to you the great fortune which has befallen James, and, I might add also, all who belong to him. And really, dearest, with all the assurance the evidence of my own senses can convey, I still find it difficult to credit such unparalleled luck. Fancy beauty — and such beauty, — youth, genius, mind, rank, and a large fortune, thrown, I may say, at his feet! She is Spanish, by the mother's side; "Las Caldenhas," I think the name, whose father was a grandee of the first class. Her own father was the General Count de St. Amand, who commanded in the celebrated battle of Austerlitz in the retreat from Moscow. I'm sure, dearest, you'll be amazed at my familiarity with these historical events; but the truth is, she is a perfect treasury of such knowledge, and I must needs gain some little by the contact.

I am at a loss how to give you any correct notion of one whose universality seems to impart to her character all the semblance of contradictory qualities. She is, for instance, proud and haughty, to a degree little short of insolence. She exacts from men a species of deference little less than a slavish submission. As she herself says, "Let them do homage." All her ideas of life and society are formed on the very grandest scale. She has known, in fact, but one "set," and that has been one where royalties moved as private individuals. Her very trinkets recall such memories;

and I have passed more than one morning admiring pearl ear-rings, with the cipher of the Czarawitsch; bracelets with the initials of an Austrian Archduke, and a diamond cross, which she forgot whether it was given her by Prince Metternich or Mehemet Ali. If you only heard her, too, how she talks of that "dear old thing, the ex-King of Bavaria," and with what affectionate regard she alludes to "her second self, — the Queen of Spain," you 'd feel at once, dearest Kitty, that you were moving amidst crowns and sceptres, with the rustle of royal purple beside, and the shadow of a thronely canopy over you. In one sense, this has been for us the very rarest piece of good fortune; for, accustomed as she has been to only one sphere, —and that the very highest, — she does not detect many little peculiarities in papa's and mamma's habits, and censure them as vulgar, but rather accepts them as the ways and customs among ordinary nobility. In fact, she thinks the Prince, as she calls papa, the very image of "Pozzo di Borgo;" and mamma she can scarcely see without saying, "Your Majesty," she is so like the Queen Dowager of Piedmont.

As to James, if it were not that I knew her real sentiments, and that she loves him to distraction, — merely judging from what goes on in society, —I should say he had not a chance of success. She takes pleasure, I almost think, in decrying the very qualities he has most pretension to. She even laughs at his horsemanship; and yesterday went so far as to say that activity was not amongst his perfections, — James, who really is the very type of agility! One of her amusements is to propose to him some impossible feat or other, and the poor boy has nearly broken his back and dislocated his limbs by contortions that nothing but a fish could accomplish. But the contrarieties of her nature do not end here! She, so grave, so dignified, so imperious, I might even call it, before others, once alone with me becomes the wildest creature in existence. The very moment she makes her escape to her own room, she can scarcely control her delight at throwing off the "Countess," as she says herself, and being once again free, joyous, and unconstrained.

I have told her, over and over again, that if James only knew her in these moods, that he would adore her even more than he does now; but she only laughs, and says, "Well, time enough; he shall see me so one of these days." It was not till after ten or twelve days that she admitted me to her real confidence. The manner of it was itself curious. "Are you sleepy?" said she to me, one evening as we went upstairs to bed; "for, if not, come and pay me a visit in my room."



I accepted the invitation; and after exchanging my evening robe for a dressing-gown, hastened to the chamber. I could scarcely believe my eyes as I entered! She was seated on a richly embroidered cushion on the floor, dressed in Turkish fashion, loose trousers of gold-sprigged muslin, with a small fez of scarlet cloth on her head, and a jacket of the same colored velvet almost concealed beneath its golden embroidery; a splendid scimitar lay beside her, and a most costly pipe, in pure Turkish taste, which, however, she did not make use of, but smoked a small paper cigarette instead.

"Come, dearest," said she, "turn the key in the door, and light your cigar; here we are at length free and happy." It was in vain that I assured her I never had tried to smoke. At first she would n't believe, and then she actually screamed with laughter at me. "One would fancy," said she, "that you had only left England yesterday. Why, child, where have you lived and with whom?" I cannot go over all she said; nor need I repeat the efforts I made to palliate my want of knowledge of life, which she really appeared to grieve over. "I should never think of asking your sister here," said she; "there is a frivolity in all her gayety — a light-heartedness, without sentiment — that I cannot abide; but you, *ma chère*, you have a nature akin to my own. You ought, and, indeed, must be one of us."

So far as I could collect, Kitty, — for remember, I was smoking my first cigarette all this time, and not particularly clear of head, — there is a set in Parisian society, the most exclusive and refined of all, who have voted the emancipation of women from all the slavery and degradation to which the social usages of the world at large would condemn them. Rightly judging that the expansion of intelligence is to be acquired only in greater liberty of action, they have admitted them to a freer community and participation in the themes which occupy men's thoughts, and the habits which accompany their moods of reflection.

Gifted, as we confessedly are, with nicer and more acute perceptions, finer powers of discrimination and judgment, greater delicacy of feeling, and more apt appreciation of the beautiful and the true, why should we descend to an intellectual bondage? As dearest Josephine says, "Our influence, to be beneficial, should be candidly and openly exercised, not furtively practised, and cunningly insinuated. Let us leave these arts to women who want to rule their husbands; our destiny be it — to sway mankind!" Her theory, so far as I understand it, is that men will not endure petty rivalries, but succumb at once to superior attainments. Thus, your masculine young lady, Kitty, — your creature of boisterous manners, slang, and slap-dash, — is invariably a disgust; but your true "lionne," gifted yet graceful, possessing every manly accomplishment and yet employing her knowledge to enhance the charms of her society and render herself more truly companionable, the equal of men in culture, their superior in taste and refinement, exercises a despotic influence around her.

Men will quit the *salon* for the play-table. Let us, then, be gamblers for the nonce, and we shall not be deserted. They smoke, that they may get together and talk with a freedom and a license not used before us. Let us adopt the custom, and we are no longer debarred from their intimacy and the power of infusing the refining influences of our sex through their barbarism! As Josephine says, "We are the martyrs now, that we may be the masters hereafter!"

I grew very faint, once or twice, while she was talking; and, indeed, at last was obliged to lie down, and have my temples bathed with eau-de-Cologne, so that I unluckily lost many of her strongest arguments and happiest illustrations; but, from frequent conversations since, and from reading some of the beautiful romances of "Georges Sand," I have attained to, if not a full appreciation, at least an unbounded admiration of this beautiful system.

Have I forgotten to tell you that we met the Prince of Pontremoli on our way here? — a Serene Highness, Kitty! but as easy and as familiar as my brother James. The drollest thing is that he has lived while in England with all the "fast people," and only talks a species of conventional slang in vogue amongst them; but for all that he is delightful,— full of gayety and good spirits, and has the wickedest dark eyes you ever beheld.

Dear Josephine's caprices are boundless! Yesterday she read of a black Arabian that the Imaum of somewhere was sending as a present to General Lamoricière, and she immediately said, "Oh, the General is exiled now, he can't want a charger, — send and get him for *me*." Poor James is out all the morning in search of some one to despatch on this difficult service; but how it is to be accomplished — not to speak of where the money is to come from — is an unreadable riddle to

Your affectionate and devoted

MARY ANNE DODD.

You will doubtless be dissatisfied, dearest Kitty, if I seal this without inserting one word about myself and my own prospects. But what can I say, save that all is mist-wreathed and shadowy in the dim future before me? *He* has said nothing since. I see — it is but too plain to see — the anguish that is tearing his very heart-strings; but he buries his sorrow within his soul, and I am not free even to weep beside the sepulchre! Oh, dearest, when you read what Georges Sand has written,— when you come to ponder over the miseries the fatal institution of marriage has wrought in the world, — the fond hearts broken, the noble natures crushed, and the proud spirits degraded, — you will only wonder why the tyranny has been borne so long! and exclaim with me, "When — oh, when shall we be free!"

LETTER XVII.

KENNY JAMES DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., OF THE GRANGE BRUFF.

PARMA.

MY DEAR TOM, — The little gleam of sunshine that shone upon us for the last week or so has turned out to be but the prelude of a regular hurricane, and all our feasting and merriment have ended in gloom, darkness, and disunion. Mrs. D.'s letter to old Molly has made known to you the circumstances under which James returned home to us, without ever having gone to London. You, of course, know all about the lovely young widow, with her immense jointure and splendid connections. If you do not, I must say that from my heart and soul I envy you, for I have heard of nothing else for the last fortnight! At all events, you have heard enough to satisfy you that the house of Dodd was about to garnish its escutcheon with some very famous quarterings, — illustrious enough even to satisfy the pride of the M'Carthys. A Cardinal's daughter — niece I mean — with four thousand a year, had deigned to ally herself with us, and we were all running breast-high in the blaze of our great success.

She came here on a visit to us while some negotiations were being concluded with the Papal Court, for we were great folk, Tom, let me tell you, and have been performing, so to say, in the same piece with popes, kings, and cardinals for the last month; and I myself, under the style and title of the "Prince," have narrowly escaped going mad from the unceasing influences of delusions, shams, and impositions in which we have been living and moving.

Of our extravagant mode of life, I 'll only say that I don't think there was anything omitted which could contribute to ruin a moderate income. Splendid apartments, grand dinners, horses, carriages, servants, opera-boxes, bouquets, were all put in requisition to satisfy the young Countess that she was about to make a suitable alliance, and that any deficiencies observable in either our manners or breeding were fully compensated for by our taste in cookery and our tact in wine. To be plain, Tom, to obtain this young widow with four thousand a year, we had to pretend to be possessed of about four times as much. It was a regular game of "brag" we were playing, and with a very bad hand of cards!

Hope led me on from day to day, trusting that each post would bring us the wished-for consent, and that at least a private marriage would ratify the compact. Popes and cardinals, however, are too stately for fast movements, and at the end of five weeks we had n't, so far as I could see, gained an inch of ground!

At one time his Holiness had gone off to Albano to bless somebody's bones, or the bones were coming to bless *him*, I forget which. At another, the King of Naples, fatigued with signing warrants for death and the galleys, desired to enjoy a little repose from public business. Cardinal Antonelli, hearing that we were Irish, got in a rage, and said that Ireland gave them no peace at all. And so it came to pass that the old thief — procrastination — was at his usual knavery; and for want of better, set to work to ruin poor Kenny Dodd!

It is only fair to observe that, except Cary and myself, nobody manifested any great impatience at this delay; and even she, I believe, merely felt it out of regard to me. The others seemed satisfied to fare sumptuously every day; and assuredly the course of true love ran most smoothly along in rivulets of "mock turtle" and "potages à la fiancée." At last, Tom, I brought myself to book with the simple question, "How long can this continue? Will your capital stand it for a month, or even a week?" Before I attempted the answer, I sent for Mrs. D., to give her the honor of solving the riddle if she could.

Our interview took place in a little crib they call my dressing-room, but which, I must remark to you, is a dark corner under a staircase, where the rats hold a parliament every night of the season. Mrs. D. was so shocked with the locality that she proposed our adjourning to her own apartment; and thither we at once repaired to hold our council.

I have too often wearied you with our domestic differences to make any addition to such recitals pleasant to either of us. You know us both thoroughly, besides, and can have no difficulty in filling up the debate which ensued. Enough that I say Mrs. D. was more than usually herself. She was grandly eloquent on the prospect of the great alliance; contemptuously indifferent about the petty sacrifice it was to cost us; caustically criticised the narrow-mindedness by which I measured such grandeur; winding up all with the stereotyped comparison between Dodds and M'Carthys, with which she usually concludes an engagement, just as they play "God save the Queen" at Vauxhall to show that the fireworks are over.

"And now," said I, "that we have got over preliminaries, when is this marriage to come off?"

"Ask the Pope when he'll sign the Bull," said she, tartly.

"Do you know," said I, "I think the 'Bull is a mistake'?" but she did n't take the joke, and I went on. "After that, what delays are there?"

"I suppose the settlement will take some time. You'll have to make suitable provision for James, to give him a handsome allowance out of the estate."

"Egad, Mrs. D.," said I, "it must be *out* of it with a vengeance, for there's no man living will advance five hundred *upon* it."

"And who wants them?" said she, angrily. "You know what I mean, well enough!"

"Upon my conscience, ma'am, I do not," said I. "You must just take pity on my stupidity and enlighten me."

"Is n't it clear, Mr. D.," said she, "that when marrying a woman with a large fortune he ought to have something himself?"

"It would be better he had; no doubt of it!"

"And if he has n't? if what should have come to him was squandered and made away with by a life of — No matter, I 'll restrain my feelings."

"Don't, then," said I, "for I find that *mine* would like a little expansion."

It took her five minutes, and a hard struggle besides, before she could resume. She had, so to say, "taken off the gloves," Tom, and it went hard with her not to have a few "rounds" for her pains. By degrees, however, she calmed down to explain that by a settlement on James she never contemplated actual value, but an inconvertible medium, a mere parchmentary figment to represent lands and tenements, — just, in fact, what we had done before, and with such memorable success, in Mary Anne's case.

"No," said I, aloud, and at once, — "no more of that humbug! You got me into that mess before I knew where I was. You involved me in such a maze of embarrassments that I was glad to take any, even a bad road, to get away from them. But you 'll not catch me in the same scrape again; and rather than deliberately sit down to sign, seal, and deliver myself a swindler, James must die a bachelor, that 's all!"

If I had told her, Tom, that I was going into holy orders, and intended to be Bishop of Madagascar, she could not have stared at me with more surprise.

"What 's come over you?" said she, at last; "what 's the meaning of all these elegant fine sentiments and scruples? Are you going to die, Mr. D.? Is it making your soul you are?"

"However unmannerly the confession, Mrs. D.," said I, "I 'm afraid I 'm not going to die; but the simple truth is that I can't be a rogue in cold blood; maybe, if I had the luck to be born a M'Carthy, I might have had better ideas on the subject." This was a poke at Morgan James M'Carthy that was transported for altering a will.

She could n't speak with passion; she was struck dumb with rage, and so, finding the enemy's artillery spiked, I opened a brisk fire at musket-range; in other words, I told her that all we had been hitherto doing abroad rarely went beyond making ourselves ridiculous, but that, though I liked fun, I could n't push a joke as far as a felony. And, finally, I declared, in a loud and very unmistakable manner, that as I had n't a sixpence to settle on James, I 'd not go through the mockery of engrossing a lie on parchment; that I thought very meanly of the whole farce we were carrying on; and that if I was only sure I could make myself intelligible in my French, I 'd just go straight to the Countess and say, — I 'm afraid to write the words as I spoke them, lest my spelling should be even worse than my pronunciation, for they were in French, but the meaning was, — "I 'm no more a Prince than I 'm Primate of Ireland. I 'm a small country gentleman, with an embarrassed estate and a rascally tenantry. I came abroad for economy, and it has almost ruined me. If you like my son, there he is for you; but don't flatter yourself that we possess either nobility or fortune."

"You 've done it now, you old — " The epithet was lost in a scream, Tom, for she went off in strong hysterics; so I just rang the bell for Mary Anne, and slipped quietly away to my own room. I trust it is a good conscience does it for me, but I find that I can almost always sleep soundly when I go to bed; and it is a great blessing, Tom,— for let me tell you, that after five or six and fifty, one's waking hours have more annoyances than pleasures about them; but the world is just like a man's mistress: he cares most for it when it is least fond of him!

I slept like a humming-top, and, indeed, there 's no saying when I should have awoke, if it had n't been for the knocking they kept up at my door.

It was Cary at last got admittance, and I had only to look in her face to see that a misfortune had befallen us.

"What is it, my dear?" said I.

"All kinds of worry and confusion, pappy," said she, taking my hand in both of hers. "The Countess is gone."

"Gone? — how? — where?"

"Gone. Started this morning, — indeed, before daybreak, — I believe for Genoa; but there 's no knowing, for the people have been evidently bribed to secrecy."

"What for? — with what object?"

"The short of the matter is this, pappy. She appears to have overheard some conversation — evidently intended to be of a private nature — that passed between you and mamma last night. How she understood it does not appear, for, of course, you did n't talk French."

"Let that pass. Proceed."

"Whatever it was that she gathered, or fancied she gathered, one thing is certain: she immediately summoned her maid, and gave orders to pack up; post-horses were also ordered, but all with the greatest secrecy. Meanwhile she indited a short note to Mary Anne, in which, after apologizing for a very unceremonious departure, she refers her to you and to mamma for the explanation, with a half-sarcastic remark 'that family confidences had much better be conducted in a measured tone of voice, and confined to the vernacular of the speakers.' With a very formal adieu to James, whom she styles 'votre estimable frère,' the letter concludes with an assurance of deep and sincere consideration on the part of Josephine de St. A."

"What does all this mean?" exclaimed I, with a terrible misgiving, Tom, that I knew only too well how the mischief originated.

"That is exactly what I want you to explain, pappy," said she, "for the letter distinctly refers to something within your knowledge."

"I must see the document itself," said I, cautiously; "fetch me the letter."

"James carried it off with him."

"Off with him, — why, is he gone too?"

"Yes, pappy, he started with post-horses after her, — at least, so far as he could make out the road she travelled. Poor fellow! he seemed almost out of his mind when he left this."

"And your mother, how is she?"

Cary shook her head mournfully.

Ah, Tom, I needed but the gesture to show me what was in store for me. My fertile imagination daguerreotyped a great family picture, in which I was shortly to fill a most lamentable part. My prophetic soul — as a novelist would call it — depicted me once more in the dock, arraigned for the ruin of my children, the wreck of their prospects, and the downfall of the Dodds. I fancied that even Cary would turn against me, and almost thought I could hear her muttering, "Ah, it was papa did it all!"

While I was thus communing with myself, I received a message from Mrs. D. that she wished to see me. I take shame to myself for the confession, Tom, but I own that I felt it like an order to come up for sentence. There could be no longer any question of my guilt, — my trial was over; there remained nothing but to hear the last words of the law, which seemed to say, "Kenny Dodd, you have been convicted of a great offence. By your blundering stupidity — your unbridled temper, and your gratuitous folly — you have destroyed your son's chance of worldly fortune, blasted his affections, and — and lost him four thousand a year. But your iniquity does not end even here. You have also —" As I reached this, the door opened, and Mrs. D., in her "buff coat," as I used to call a certain flannel dressing-gown that she usually donned for battle, slowly entered, followed by Mary Anne, with a whole pharmacopœia of restoratives, — an "ambulance" that plainly predicted hot work before us. Resolving that our duel should have no witnesses, I turned the girls out of the room, and for the same reason do I preserve a rigid secrecy as to all the details of our engagement; enough when I say that the sun went down upon our wrath, and it was near nightfall when we drew off our forces. Though I fought vigorously, and with the courage of despair, I could n't get over the fact that it was my unhappy explosion in French that did all the mischief. I tried hard to make it appear that her sudden departure was rather a boon than otherwise; that our expenses were terrific, and, moreover, that, as I was determined against any fictitious settlement, her flight had only anticipated a certain catastrophe; but all these devices availed me little against my real culpability, which no casuistry could get over.

"Well, ma'am," said I, at last, "one thing is quite clear, — the Continent does not suit us. All our experience of foreign life and manners neither guides us in difficulty nor warns us when in danger. Let us go back to where we are, at least, as wise as our neighbors, — where we are familiar with the customs, and where, whatever our shortcomings, we meet with the indulgent judgment that comes of old acquaintance."

"Where 's that?" said she. "I 'm curious to know where is this elegant garden of paradise?"

"Bruff, ma'am, — our own neighborhood."

"Where we were always in hot water with every one. Were you ever out of a squabble on the Bench or at the poorhouse? Were n't you always disputing about land with the tenants, and about water with the miller? Had n't you a row at every assizes, and a skirmish at every road session? Bruff, indeed; it 's a new thing to hear it called the Happy Valley!"

"Faith, I know I 'm not Rasselas," said I.

"You 're restless enough," said she, mistaking the word; "but it 's your own temper that does it. No, Mr. D., if you want to go back to Ireland, I won't be selfish enough to oppose it; but as for myself, I 'll never set a foot in it."

"You are determined on that?" said I.

"I am," said she.

"In that case, ma'am," said I, "I 'm only losing valuable time waiting for you to change your mind; so I 'll start at once."

"A pleasant journey to you, Mr. D.," said she, flouncing out of the room, and leaving me the field of battle, but scarcely the victory. Now, Tom, I 've too much to do and to think about to discuss the point that I know you 're eager for, — which of us was more in the wrong. Such debates are only casuistry from beginning to end. Besides, at all events, *my* mind is made up. I 'll go back at once. The little there ever was of anything good about me is fast oozing away in this life of empty parade and vanity. Mary Anne and James are both the worse of it; who knows how long Cary will resist its evil influence? I 'll go down to Genoa, and take the Peninsular steamer straight for Southampton. I 'm a bad sailor, but it will save me a few pounds, and some patience besides, in escaping the lying and cheating scoundrels I should meet in a land journey.

To any of the neighbors, you may say that I 'm coming home for a few weeks to look after the tenants; and to any whom you think would believe it, just hint that the Government has sent for me.

I conclude that I'll be very short of cash when I reach Genoa, so send me anything you can lay hands on, and believe me,

Ever yours faithfully,
KENNY JAMES DODD.

P. S. I told you this was a cheap place. The bill has just come up, and it beats the "Clarendon"! It appears that his Serene Highness told them to treat us like princes, and we must pay in the same style. I'm going to settle part of our debt by parting with our travelling-carriage, which, besides assisting the exchequer, will be a great shock to Mrs. D., and a foretaste of what she has to come down to when I'm gone. It is seldom that a man can combine the double excellence of a great financier and a great moralist!

LETTER XVIII.

MARY ANNE DODD TO MISS DOOLAN, OF BALLYDOOLAN.

"Cour de Parme," Parma.

Dearest Kitty, — So varied have been my emotions of late, and with such whirlwind rapidity have they succeeded each other in my distracted brain, that I am really at a loss to know where I left off in my last epistle to you, and at what particular crisis in our adventures I closed my narrative. Forgive me, dearest, if I impose on you the tiresome task of listening twice to the same tale, or the almost equally unpleasant duty of trying to follow me through gaps of unexplained events.

Have I told you of the Countess's departure, — that most mysterious flight, which has thrown poor James into, I fear, a hopeless melancholy, and made shipwreck of his heart forever? I feel as if I had revealed it to my dearest Kitty; my soul whispers to me that she bears her share in my sorrows, and mingles her tears with mine. Yes, dearest, she is gone! Some indiscreet revelations papa made to mamma in his room would appear to have disclosed more of our private affairs than ought to have obtained publicity, were overheard by her, and she immediately gave orders to her servants to pack up, leaving a very vague note behind her, plainly intimating, however, that papa might, if he pleased, satisfactorily account for the step she had taken. This, and a few almost flippant acknowledgments of our attentions, concluded an epistle that fell in the midst of us like a rocket.

If I feel deeply wounded at the slight thus shown us, and the still heavier injury inflicted on poor dear James, yet am I constrained to confess that Josephine was quite justified in what she did. Born in the very highest class, all her habits, her ways, her very instincts aristocratic, the bare thought of an alliance with a family struggling with dubious circumstances must have been too shocking! I did not ever believe that she returned James's affection; she liked him, perhaps, well enough, — that is, well enough to marry! She deemed him her equal in rank and fortune, and in that respect regarded the match as a fair one. To learn that we were neither titled nor rich, neither great by station nor rolling in wealth, was of course to feel that she had been deceived and imposed upon, and might reasonably warrant even the half-sarcastic spirit of her farewell note.

To tell what misery this has cost us all is quite beyond me; scorned affection, — blasted hopes, — ambitions scattered to the winds, — a glorious future annihilated! Conceive all of these that you can, and then couple them with meaner and more vulgar regrets, as to what enormous extravagance the pursuit has involved us in, the expense of a style of living that even a prince could scarcely have maintained, and all at a little secluded capital where nobody comes, nobody lives; so that we do not reap even the secondary advantage of that notoriety for which we have to pay so dearly. Mamma and I, who think precisely alike on these subjects, are overwhelmed with misery as we reflect over what the money thus squandered would have done at Rome, Florence, or Vienna!

James is distracted, and papa sits poring all day long over papers and accounts, by way of arranging his affairs before his death. Cary alone maintains her equanimity, for which she may thank the heartlessness of a nature insensible to all feeling.

Imagine a family circle of such ingredients! Think of us as you saw us last, even in all the darkness of Dodsborough, and you will find it difficult to believe we are the same! Yet, dearest, it might all have been different, — how different! But papa — there is no use trying to conceal it — has a talent for ruining the prospects of his family, that no individual advantages, no combination of events, however felicitous, can avail against! An absurd and most preposterous notion of being what he calls "honest and aboveboard" leads him to excesses of every kind, and condemns us to daily sorrows and humiliations. It is in vain that we tell him nobody parades his debts no more than his infirmities; that people wear their best faces for the world, and that credit is the same principle in morals as in mercantile affairs. His reply is, "No. I'm tired of all that. I never perform a great part without longing for the time when I shall be Kenny Dodd again!"

This one confession will explain to you the hopelessness of all our efforts to rise in life, and our last resource is in the prospect of his going back to Ireland. Mamma has already proposed to accept a thousand a year for herself and me; while Cary should return with papa to Dodsborough. It is possible that this arrangement might have been concluded ere this, but that papa has got a relapse of his gout, and been laid up for the last eight days. He refuses to see any doctor, saying that they all drive the malady in by depletion, and has taken to drinking port wine all day long, by way of confining the attack to his foot. What is to be the success of this treatment has yet to be seen, but up to this time its only palpable effect has been to make him like a chained tiger. He roars and shouts fearfully, and has smashed all the more portable articles of furniture in the room, — throwing them at the waiters. He insists, besides, on having his bill made up every night, so that instead of one grand engagement once a week, we have now a smart skirmish every evening, which usually lasts till bedtime.

For economy, too, we have gone up to the second story, and come down to a very meagre dinner. No carriage, — no saddle-horses, — no theatre. The courier dismissed, and a strict order at the bar against all "extras."

James lies all day abed; Cary plays nurse to papa; mamma and I sit moping beside a little miserable stove till evening, when we receive our one solitary visitor, — a certain Father M'Grail, an Irish priest, who has been resident here for thirty years, and is known as the Padre Giacomo! He is a spare, thin, pock-marked little man, with a pair of downcast, I was going to say dishonest-looking, eyes, who talks with an accent as rich as though he only left Kilrush yesterday. We have only known him ten days, but he has already got an immense influence over mamma, and induced her to read innumerable little books, and to practise a variety of small penances besides. I suspect he is rather afraid of *me*, — at least we maintain towards each other a kind of armed neutrality; but mamma will not suffer me to breathe a word against him.

It is not unlikely that he owes much of the esteem mamma feels for him to his own deprecatory estimate of papa, whom he pronounces to be, in many respects, almost as infamous as a Protestant. Cary he only alludes to by throwing up hands and eyes, and seeming to infer that she is irrecoverably lost.

I own to you, Kitty, I don't like him, — I scarcely trust him, — but it is, after all, such a resource to have any one to talk to, anything to break the dull monotony of this dreary life, that I hail his coming with pleasure, and am actually working a rochet, or an alb, or a something else for him to wear on Saint Nicolo of Treviso's "festa," — an occasion on which the little man desires to appear with extraordinary splendor. Mamma, too, is making a canopy to hold over his honored head; and I sincerely hope that our *œuvres méritoires* will redound to our future advantage! I am half afraid that I have shocked you with an apparent irreverence in speaking of these things, but I must confess to you, dearest Kitty, that I am occasionally provoked beyond all bounds by the degree of influence this small saint exercises in our family, and by no means devoid of apprehension lest his dominion should become absolute. Even already he has persuaded mamma that papa's illness will resist all medical skill to the end of time, and will only yield to the intervention of a certain Saint Agatha of Orsaro, a newly discovered miracle-worker, of whose fame you will doubtless hear much erelong.

To my infinite astonishment, papa is quite converted to this opinion, and Cary tells me is most impatient to set out for Orsaro, a little village at the foot of the mountain of that name, and about thirty miles from this. As the only approach is by a bridle-path, we are to travel on mules or asses; and I look forward to the excursion, if not exactly with pleasure, with some interest. Father Giacomo — I can't call him anything else — has already written to secure rooms for us at the little inn; and we are meanwhile basely employed in the manufacture of certain pilgrim costumes, which are indispensable to all frequenting the holy shrine. The dress is far from unbecoming, I assure you; a loose robe of white stuff—ours are Cashmere—with wide sleeves, and a large hood lined with sky-blue; a cord of the same color round the waist; no shoes or stockings, but light sandals, which show the foot to perfection. An amber rosary is the only ornament permitted; but the whole is charming.

Saint Agatha of Orsaro will unquestionably make a great noise in the world; and it will therefore be interesting to you to know something of her history,—or, what Fra Giacomo more properly calls, her manifestation—which was in this wise: The priest of Orsaro—a very devout and excellent man—had occasion to go into the church late at night on the eve of Saint Agatha's festival. He was anxious, I believe, to see that all the decorations to do honor to the day were in proper order, and, taking a lamp from the sacristy, he walked down the aisle till he came to the shrine, where the saint's image stood. He knelt for a moment to address her in prayer, when, with a sudden sneeze, she extinguished his light, and left him fainting and in darkness on the floor of the church. In this fashion was he discovered the following morning, when, after coming to himself, he made the revelation I have just given you. Since that she has been known to sneeze three times, and on each occasion a miracle has followed. The fame of this wonderful occurrence has now traversed Italy, and will doubtless soon extend to the faithful in every part of Europe. Orsaro is becoming crowded with penitents; among whom I am gratified to see the names of many of the English aristocracy; and it has become quite a fashionable thing to pass a week or ten days there.

Now, dearest Kitty, from you, with whom I have no concealments, I will not disguise the confession that I look forward to this excursion with considerable hope and expectation. You cannot but have perceived latterly how our faith, instead of being, as it once was, the symbol of low birth and ignoble connections, has become the very bond of aristocratic society. The church has become the *salon* wherein we make our most valued acquaintances; and devout observances are equivalent to letters of introduction. If I wanted a proof of this, I'd give it in the number of those who have become converts to our religion, from the manifest social benefits the change of faith has conferred. How otherwise would third and fourth-rate Protestants obtain access to Princely *soirées* and Ducal receptions? By what other road could they arrive at recognition in the society of Rome and Naples, frequent Cardinals' levees, and be even seen lounging in the ante-chambers of the Vatican!

Hence it is clear that the true faith has its benefits in *this* world also, and that piety is a passport to high places even on earth. I have no doubt, if we manage properly, our sojourn at Orsaro may be made very profitable, and that, even without miracles, the excursion may pay us well.

I have been interrupted by a message to attend mamma in her own room, — a summons I rightly guessed to imply something of importance. Only fancy, Kitty, it was a letter which had arrived addressed to papa, — but of course not given to him to read in his present highly agitated state, — from Captain Morris, with a proposal for Caroline!

He very properly sets out by acknowledging the great difference of age between them, but he might certainly have added something as to the discrepancy between their stations. He talks, too, of his small means, "sufficient for those who can limit their ambitions and wants within a narrow circle," — I wonder who they are? — and professes a deal of that cold kind of respectful love which all old men affect to think a woman ought to feel flattered by. In fact, the whole reads far more like a law paper than a love-letter, and is rather a rough draft of an Act of Parliament against celibacy than a proposal for a pretty girl!

Mamma had shown the letter to Fra Giacomo before I entered, and I had very little trouble to guess the effect produced by his counsels. The Captain, as a heretic, was at once denounced by him; and the little man grew actually enthusiastic in inveighing against the insulting presumption of the offer. He insisted on a peremptory, flat rejection of the proposal, without any reference whatever to papa. He said that to hesitate in such a question was in itself a sin; and he even hinted that he was n't quite sure what reception Saint Agatha might vouchsafe us after so much of intercourse with an outcast and a disbeliever.

This last argument was decisive, and I accordingly sat down and wrote, in mamma's name, a very stiff acknowledgment of the receipt of his letter, and an equally cold refusal of the honor it tendered for our acceptance. We all agreed that Cary should hear nothing whatever of the matter, but, as Fra Giacomo said, "we 'd keep the disgrace for our own hearts."

I own to you, Kitty, that if the religious question could be got over, I do not think the thing so inadmissible. Cary is evidently not destined to advance our family interests; had she even the capacity, she lacks the ambition. Her tastes are humble, commonplace, and — shall I say it? — vulgar.

It gives her no pleasure to move in high society, and she esteems the stupid humdrum of domestic life as the very supreme of happiness. With such tastes this old Captain — he is five-and-thirty at least — would perhaps have suited her perfectly, and his intolerable mother been quite a companion. Their small fortune, too, would have consigned them to some cheap, out-of-the-way place, where we should not have met; and, in fact, the arrangement might have combined a very fair share of advantage. Fra G., however, had decided the matter on higher grounds, and there is no more to be said about it.

There is another letter come by this post, too, from Lord George, dearest! He is to arrive to-night, if he can get horses. He is full of some wonderful tournament about to be held at Genoa, — a spectacle to be given by the city to the King, which is to attract all the world thither; and Lord G. writes to say that we have n't a moment to lose in securing accommodation at the hotel. Little suspecting the frame of mind his communication is to find us in, and that, in place of doughty deeds and chivalrous exploits, our thoughts are turned to fastings, mortifications, and whipcord! Oh, how I shudder at the ridicule with which he will assail us, and tremble for my own constancy under the raillery he will shower on us! I never dreaded his coming before, and would give worlds now that anything could prevent his arrival.

How reconcile his presence with that of Fra Giacomo? How protect the priest from the overt quizzings of my Lord? and how rescue his Lordship from the secret machinations of the "father"? are difficulties that I know not how to face. Mamma, besides, is now so totally under priestly guidance that she would sacrifice the whole peerage for a shaving of a saint's shin-bone! There will not be even time left me to concert measures with Lord G. The moment he enters the house he'll see the "altered temper of our ways" in a thousand instances. Relics, missals, beads, and rosaries have replaced Gavarni's etchings,—"Punch," and the "Illustration." Charms and amulets blessed by popes occupy the places of cigar-holders, pipe-sticks, and gutta-percha drolleries. The "Stabat Mater" has usurped the seat of "Casta Diva" on the piano, and a number of other unmistakable signs point to our reformed condition.

I hear post-horses approaching — they come nearer and nearer! Yes, Kitty, it must be — it is he! James has met him — they are already on the stairs — how they laugh! James must be telling him everything. I knew he would. Another burst of that unfeeling laughter! They are at the door. Good-bye!

MOUNT ORSARO, "LA PACE."

Here we are, dearest, at the end of our pilgrimage. Such a delightful excursion I never remember to have taken. I told you all about my fears of Lord George. Would that I had never written the ungracious lines! — never so foully wronged him! Instead of the levity I apprehended, he is actually reverential, — I might say, devout! The moment he reached Parma, he ordered a dress to be made for him exactly like James's, and decided immediately on accompanying us. Fra Giacomo, I need scarcely observe, was in ecstasies. The prospect of such a noble convert would be an immense piece of success, and he did not hesitate to avow, would materially advance his own interests at Rome.

As for the journey, Kitty, I have no words to describe the scenery through which we travelled: deep glens between lofty mountains, wooded to the very summits with cork and chestnut trees, over which, towering aloft, were seen the peaks of the great Apennines, glistening in snow, or golden in the glow of sunset. Wending along through these our little procession went, in itself no unpicturesque feature, for we were obliged to advance in single file along the narrow pathway, and thus our mules, with their scarlet trappings and tasselled bridles, and our floating costumes, made up an effect which will remain painted on my heart forever. In reality, I made a sketch of the scene; but Lord George, who for the convenience of talking to me always rode with his face to the mule's tail, made me laugh so often that my drawing is quite spoiled.

At last we arrived at our little inn called "La Pace," — how beautifully it sounds, dearest! and really stands so, too, beside a gushing mountain-stream, and perfectly embowered in olives. We could only obtain two rooms, however, — one, adjoining the kitchen, for papa and mamma; the other, under the tiles, for Cary and myself. Fra Giacomo quarters himself on the priest of the village; and Lord George and James are what the Italians call "*a spasso.*" Betty Cobb is furious at being consigned to the kitchen, in company with some thirty others, many of whom, I may remark, are English people of rank and condition. In fact, dearest, the whole place is so crowded that a miserable room, in all its native dirt and disgust, costs the price of a splendid apartment in Paris. Many of the first people of Europe are here: ministers, ambassadors, generals; and an English earl also, who is getting a drawing made of the shrine and the Virgin, and intends sending a narrative of her miracles to the "Tablet." You have no idea, my dearest Kitty, of the tone of affectionate kindness and cordiality inspired by such a scene. Dukes, Princes, even Royalties, accost you as their equals. As Fra G. says, "The holy influences level distinctions." The Duke of San Pietrino placed his own cushion for mamma to kneel on yesterday. The Graf von Dummerslungen gave me a relic to kiss as I passed this morning. Lord Tollington, one of the proudest peers in England, stopped to ask papa how he was, and regretted we had not arrived last Saturday, when the Virgin sneezed twice!

As we begin our Novena to-morrow, I shall probably not have a moment to continue this rambling epistle; but you may confidently trust that my first thoughts, when again at liberty, shall be given to you. Till then, darling Kitty, believe me,

Your devoted and ever affectionate

Mary Anne Dodd.

P. S. More arrivals, Kitty, — three carriages and eleven donkeys! Where they are to put up I can't conceive. Lord G. says, "It's as full as the 'Diggins,' and quite as dear." The excitement and novelty of the whole are charming!

LETTER XIX.

MRS. DODD TO MRS. MARY GALLAGHER, DODSBOROUGH.

ORSARO, FEAST OF SAINT GINGO.

MY DEAR MOLLY, — The Earl of Guzeberry, that leaves this to-day for England, kindly offers to take charge of my letters to you; and so I write "Favored by his Lordship" on the outside, just that you may show the neighbors, and teach them Davises the respect they ought to show us, if it 's ever our misfortune to meet.

The noble Lord was here doing his penances with us for the last three weeks, and is now my most intimate friend on earth. He 's the kindest-hearted creature I ever met, and always doing good works, of one sort or other; and whenever not sticking nails in his own flesh, or pulling hairs out of his beard or eyelashes, always ready to chastise a friend!

We came here to see the wonderful Virgin of Orsaro, and beg her intercession for us all, but more especially for K. I., whose temper proves clearly that there 's what Father James calls a "possession of him;" that is to say, "he has devils inside of him." The whole account of the saint herself — her first manifestation and miraculous doings — you 'll find in the little volume that accompanies this, written, as you will see, by your humble servant. Lord G. gave me every assistance in his power; and, indeed, but for him and Father James, it might have taken years to finish it; for I must tell you, Molly, bad as Berlin-work is, it 's nothing compared to writing a book; for when you have the wool and the frame, it 's only stitching it in, but with a book you have to arrange your thoughts, and then put them down; after that, there 's the grammar to be minded, and the spelling, and the stops; and many times, where you think it 's only a comma, you have come to your full period! I assure you I went through more with that book — little as it is — than in all my "observances," some of them very severe ones. First of all, we had to be so particular about the miracles, knowing well what Protestant bigotry would do when the account came out. We had to give names and dates and places, with witnesses to substantiate, and all that could corroborate the facts. Then we had a difficulty of another kind, — how to call the Virgin. You may remember how those Exeter Hall wretches spoke of Our Lady of Rimini, — as the "Winking Virgin." We could n't say sneezing after that, so we just called her "La Madonna dei Sospiri," — "Our Lady of Sighs." To be sure, we can't get the people here to adopt this title; but that 's no consequence as regards England.

By the time the volume reaches you, all Europe will be ringing with the wonderful tidings; for there are three bishops here, and they have all signed the "Mémoire," recommending special services in honor of the Virgin, and strongly urging a subscription to build a suitable shrine for her in this her native village.

You have no idea, dear Molly, of what a blessed frame of mind these spiritual duties have enabled me to enjoy. How peaceful is my spirit! — how humble my heart! I turn my thoughts away from earth as easily as I could renounce rope-dancing; and when I sit of an evening, in a state of what Lord Guzeberry calls "beatitude," K. I. might have the cholera without my caring for it.

The season is now far advanced, however, and, to my infinite grief, we must leave this holy spot, where we have made a numerous and most valuable acquaintance; for, besides several of the first people of England, we have formed intimacy with the Duchessa di Sangue Nero, first lady to the Queen of Naples; the Marquesa di Villa Guasta, a great leader of fashion in Turin; the "Noncio" at the court of Modena; and a variety of distinguished Florentines and Romans, who all assure us that our devotions are the best passports for admission in all the select houses of Italy.

Mary Anne predicts a brilliant winter before us, and even Cary is all delight at the prospect of picture galleries and works of art. Is n't it paying the Protestants off for their insulting treatment of us at home, Molly, to see all the honor and respect we receive abroad? The tables are completely turned, my dear; for not one of them ever gets his nose into the really high society of this country, while we are welcomed to it with open arms. But if there 's anything sure to get you well received in the first houses, it is having a convert of rank in your train. To be the means of bringing a lord over to the true fold is to be taken up at once by cardinals and princes of all kinds.

As Mary Anne says, "Let us only induce Lord George to enter the Catholic Church and our fortune is made." And oh, Molly, putting all the pomps and vanities of this world aside, never heeding the grandeur of this life, nor caring what men may do to us, is n't it an elegant reflection to save one poor creature from the dreadful road of destruction and ruin! I 'm sure it would be the happiest day of my life when I could read in the "Tablet," "We have great satisfaction in annnouncing to our readers that Lord George Tiverton, member for" — I forget where — "and son of the Marquis" — I forget whom, — "yesterday renounced the errors of the Protestant Church to embrace those of the Church of Rome."

Maybe, now, you 'd like to hear something about ourselves; but I 've little to tell that is either pleasant or entertaining. You know — or, at least, you will know from Kitty Doolan — the way K. I. destroyed poor James, and lost him a beautiful creature and four thousand a year. That was a blow there 's no getting over; and, indeed, I 'd have sunk under it if it was n't for Father James, and the consolation he has been able to give me. There was an offer came for Caroline. Captain Morris, that you 've heard me speak of, wrote and proposed, which I opened during K. I.'s illness, and sent him a flat refusal, Molly, with a bit of advice in the end, about keeping in his own rank of life, and marrying into his own creed.

Maybe I might n't have been so stout about rejecting him, for it 's the hardest thing in life to marry a daughter nowadays, but that Father Giacomo said his Holiness would never forgive me for taking a heretic into the family, and that it was one of the nine deadly sins.

You may perceive from this, that Father G. is of great use to me when I need advice and guidance, and, indeed, I consulted him as to whether I ought to separate from K. I., or not. There are cases of conscience, he tells me, and cases of convenience. The first are matters for the cardinals and the Holy College! but the others any ordinary priest can settle; and this is one of them. "Don't leave him," says he, "for your means of doing good will only be more limited; and as to your trials, take out some of your mortifications that way; and, above all, don't be too lenient to *him*." Ay, Molly, he saw my weak point, do what I would to hide it; he knew my failing was an easy disposition, and a patient, submissive turn of mind. But I 'll do my endeavor to conquer it, if it was only for the poor children's sake; for I know he 'd marry again, and I sometimes suspect I 've hit the one he has his eyes on.

On Friday next we are to leave this for Genoa. It 's the end of our Novena, and we would n't have time for another before the snow sets in; for though we 're in Italy, Molly, the mountains all round us are tipped with snow, and it 's as cold now, when you 're in the shade, as I ever felt it in Ireland. It 's a great tournament at Genoa is taking us there. There 's to be the King of Saxony, and the King of Bohemia, too, I believe; for whenever you begin to live in fashionable life, you must run after royal people from place to place, be seen wherever they are, and be quite satisfied whenever your name is put down among the "distinguished company."

I was near forgetting that I want you to get Father John to have my little book read by the children in our National School; for, as K. I. is the patron, we have, of course, the right. At all events *I'll* withdraw if they refuse; and they can't accuse me of illiberality or bigotry, for I never said a word against the taking away the Bible. Let them just remember *that!*

Lord Guzeberry is just going, so that I have only time to seal, and sign myself as ever yours,

JEMIMA DODD.

I send you two dozen of the tracts to distribute among our friends. The one bound in red silk is for Dean O'Dowd, "with the author's devotions and duties."

LETTER XX.

BETTY COBB TO MISTRESS SHUSAN O'SHEA.

MOUNT ORSARO.

MY DEAR SHUSAN, — It 's five months and two days since I wrote to you last, and it 's like five years in regard to the way time has worn and distressed me. The mistress tould Mrs. Gallagher how I was deserted by that deceatfull blaguard, taking off with him my peace of mind, two petticoats, and a blue cloth cloak, that I thought would last me for life! so that I need n't go over my miseries again to yourself. We heard since that he had another wife in Switzerland, not to say two more wandering about, so that the master says, if we ever meet him, we can hang him for "bigotry." And, to tell you the truth, Shusy, I feel as if it would be a great relief to me to do it! if it was only to save other craytures from the same feat that he did to your poor friend Betty Cobb; besides that, until something of the kind is done, I can't enter the holy state again with any other deceaver.

Such a life as we 're leadin', Shusy, at one minute all eatin' and drinkin' and caressin' from morning till night; at another, my dear, it 's all fastin' and mortification, for the mistress has no modderation at all; but, as the master says, she 's always in her extremities! If ye seen the dress of her last week, she was Satan from head to foot, and now she 's, by way of a saint, in white Cashmar, with a little scurge at her waist, and hard pegs in her shoes!

We have nothin' to eat but roots, like the beasts of the field; and them, too, mostly raw! That 's to make us good soldiers of the Church, Father James says; but in my heart and soul, Shusy, I 'm sick of the regiment. Shure, when we 've a station in Ireland, it only lasts a day or two at most; and if your knees is sore with the pennance, shure you have the satisfaction of the pleasant evenings after; with, maybe, a dance, or, at all events, tellin' stories over a jug of punch; but here it 's prayers and stripes, stripes and offices, starvation and more stripes, till, savin' your presence, I never sit down without a screech!

Why we came here I don't know; the mistress says it was to cure the master; but did n't I hear her tell him a thousand times that the bad drop was in him, and he 'd never be better to his dyin' day? so that it can't be for that. Sometimes I think it 's to get Mary Anne married, and they want Saint Agatha to help them; but faith, Shusy, one sinner is worth two saints for the like of that. Lord George tould me in confidence — the other day it was — that the mistress wanted an increase to her family. Faith, you may well open your eyes, my dear, but them 's his words! And tho' I did n't believe him at first, I 'm more persuaded of it now, that I see how she 's goin' on.

If the master only suspected it, he 'd be off to-morrow, for he 's always groanin' and moanin' over the expense of the family; and, between you and me, I believe I ought to go and tell him. Maybe you 'd give me advice what to do, for it 's a nice point.

You would n't know Paddy Byrne, how much he 's grown, and the wonderful whiskers he has all over his face; but he 's as bowld as brass, and has the impedince of the divil in him. He never ceases tormentin' me about Taddy, and says I ought to take out a few florins in curses on him, jùst as if I could n't do it cheaper myself than payin' a priest for it. As for Paddy himself, — do what the mistress will, — she can get no good of him, in regard to his duties. He does all his stations on his knees, to be sure, but with a cigar in his mouth; and when he comes to the holy well, it 's a pull at a dram bottle he takes instead of the blessed water. I wondered myself at his givin' a crown-piece to the Virgin on Tuesday last, but he soon showed me what he was at by sayin', "If she does n't get my wages riz for that, the divil receave the farthin' she 'll ever receave of mine again!"

After all, Shusy, it 's an elegant sight to see all them great people that thinks so much of themselves, crawling about on their hands and knees, kissin' a relict here, huggin' a stone there, just as much frightened about the way the saint looks at them as one of us! It does one's heart good to know that, for all their fine livin' and fine clothes, ould Nick has the same hould of them that he has of you and me!

I had a great deal to tell you about the family and their goin's on, but I must conclude in haste, for tho' it 's only five o'clock, there 's the bell ringing for mattins, and I have a station to take before first mass. I suppose it 's part of my mortifications, but the mistress and Mary Anne never gives me a stitch of clothes till they 're spoiled; and I 'm drivin to my wits' end, tearin' and destroyin' things in such a way as not to ruin them when they come to me! Miss Caroline never has a gown much better than my own; and, indeed, she said the other day, "When I want to be smart, Betty, you must lend me your black bombaseen."

There 's the mistress gone out already, so no more from

Your sincear friend,

Betty Cobb.

I think Lord G. is right about the mistress. The saints forgive her, at her time of life! More in my next.

LETTER XXI.

JAMES DODD TO ROBERT DOOLAN, ESQ. TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

THE INN, ORSARO.

MY DEAR BOB, — This must be a very brief epistle, since, amongst other reasons, the sheet of letter-paper costs me a florin, and I shall have to pay three more for a messenger to convey it to the post-town, a distance of as many miles off. To explain these scarce credible facts, I must tell you that we are at a little village called Orsaro, in the midst of a wild mountain country, whither we have come to perform penances, say prayers, and enact other devotions at the shrine of a certain St. Agatha, who, some time last autumn, took to working miracles down here, and consequently attracting all the faithful who had nothing to do with themselves before Carnival.

My excellent mother it was who, in an access of devotion, devised the excursion; and the governor, hearing that the locality was a barbarous one, and the regimen a strict fast, fancied, of course, it would be a most economical dodge, at once agreed; but, by Jove! the saving is a delusion and a snare. Two miserable rooms, dirty and ill furnished, cost forty francs a day; bad coffee and black bread, for breakfast, are supplied at four francs a head; dinner — if by such a name one would designate a starved kid stewed in garlic, or a boiled hedgehog with chiccory sauce, — ten francs each; sour wine at the price of Château Lafitte; and a seat in the sanctuary, to see the Virgin, four times as dear as a stall at the Italian Opera. Exorbitant as all these charges are, we are gravely assured that they will be doubled whenever the Virgin sneezes again, that being the manifestation, as they call it, by which she displays her satisfaction at our presence here. I do not fancy talking irreverently of these things, Bob, but I own to you I am ineffably shocked at the gross impositions innkeepers, postmasters, donkey-owners, and others practise by trading on the devotional feelings and pious aspirations of weak but worthy people. I say nothing of the priests themselves; they may or may not believe all these miraculous occurrences. One thing, however, is clear: they make every opportunity of judging of them so costly that only a rich man can afford himself the luxury, so that you and I, and a hundred others like us, may either succumb or scoff, as we please, without any means of correcting our convictions. One inevitable result ensues from this. There are two camps: the Faithful, who believe everything, and are cheated by every imaginable device of mock relics and made-up miracles; and the Unbelieving, who actually rush into ostentatious vice, to show their dislike to hypocrisy! Thus, this little dirty village, swarming with priests, and resounding with the tramp of processions, is a den of every kind of dissipation. The rattle of the dice-box mingles with the nasal chantings of the tonsured monks, and the wild orgies of a drinking party blend with the strains of the organ! If men be not religiously minded, the contact with the Church seems to make demons of them. How otherwise interpret the scoff and mockery that unceasingly go forward against priests and priestcraft in a little community, as it were, separated for acts of piety and devotion?

That we live in a most believing age is palpable, by the fact that this place swarms with men distinguished in every court and camp in Europe. Crafty ministers, artful diplomatists, keen old generals, versed in every wile and stratagem, come here as it were to divest themselves of all their long-practised acuteness, and give in their adhesion to the most astounding and incoherent revelations. I cannot bring myself to suppose these men rogues and hypocrites, and yet I have nearly as much difficulty to believe them dupes! What have become of those sharp perceptive powers, that clever insight into motives, and the almost unerring judgment they could exhibit in any question of politics or war? It cannot surely be that they who have measured themselves with the first capacities of the world dread to enter the lists against some half-informed and narrow-minded village curate; or is it that there lurks in every human heart some one spot, a refuge as it were for credulity, which even the craftiest cannot exclude? You are far better suited than I to canvass such a question, my dear Bob. I only throw it out for your consideration, without any pretension to solve it myself.

My father, you are well aware, is too good a Churchman to suffer a syllable to escape his lips which might be construed into discredit of the faith; but I can plainly see that he skulks his penances, and shifts off any observance that does not harmonize with his comfort. At the same time he strongly insists that the fastings and other privations enjoined are an admirable system to counteract the effect of that voluptuous life practised in almost every capital of Europe. As he shrewdly remarked, "This place was like Groeffenberg, — you might not be restored by the water-cure, but you were sure to be benefited by early hours, healthful exercise, and a light diet." This, you may perceive, is a very modified approval of the miracles.

I have dwelt so long on this theme that I have only left myself what Mary Anne calls the selvage of my paper, for anything else. Nor is it pleasant to me, Bob, to tell you that I am low-spirited and down-hearted. A month ago, life was opening before me with every prospect of happiness and enjoyment. A lovely creature, gifted and graceful, of the very highest rank and fortune, was to have been mine. She was actually domesticated with us, and only waiting for the day which should unite our destinies forever, when one night — I can scarcely go on — I know not how either to convey to you what is *half* shrouded in mystery, and should be perhaps *all* concealed in shame; but somehow my father contrived to talk so of our family affairs — our debts, our difficulties, and what not — that Josephine overheard everything, and shocked possibly more at our duplicity than at our narrow fortune, she hurried away at midnight, leaving a few cold lines of farewell behind her, and has never been seen or heard of since.

I set out after her to Milan; thence to Bologna, where I thought I had traces of her. From that I went to Rimini, and on a false scent down to Ancona. I got into a slight row there with the police, and was obliged to retrace my steps, and arrived at Parma, after three weeks' incessant travelling, heart-broken and defeated.

That I shall ever rally, — that I shall ever take any real interest in life again, is totally out of the question. Such an opportunity of fortune as this rarely occurs to any one once in life; none are lucky enough to meet it a second time. The governor, too, instead of feeling, as he ought, that he has been the cause of my ruin, continues to pester me about the indolent way I spend my life, and inveighs against even the little dissipations that I endeavor to drown my sorrows by indulging in. It's all very well to talk about active employment, useful pursuits, and so forth; but a man ought to have his mind at ease, and his heart free from care, for all these, as I told the governor yesterday. When a fellow has got such a "stunner" as I have had lately, London porter and a weed are his only solace. Even Tiverton's society is distasteful, he has such a confoundedly flippant way of treating one.

I'm thinking seriously of emigrating, and wish you could give me any useful hints on the subject. Tiverton knows a fellow out there, who was in the same regiment with himself, — a baronet, I believe, — and he's doing a capital stroke of work with a light four-in-hand team that he drives, I think, between San Francisco and Geelong, but don't trust me too far in the geography; he takes the diggers at eight pounds a head, and extra for the "swag." Now that is precisely the thing to suit me; I can tool a coach as well as most fellows: and as long as one keeps on the box they don't feel it like coming down in the world!

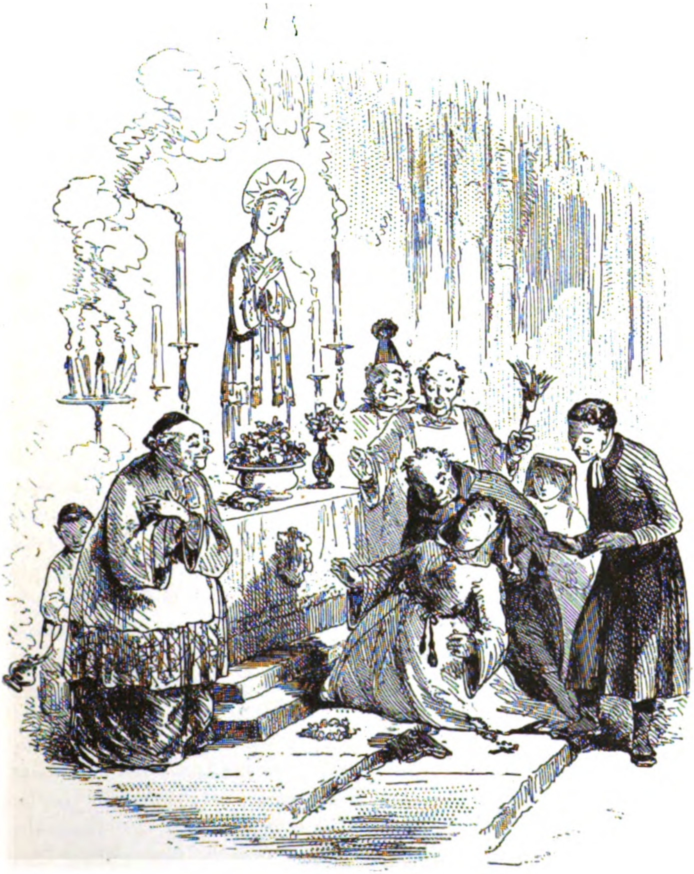
I half suspect Tiverton would come out too. At least, he seems very sick of England, as everybody must be that has n't ten thousand a year and a good house in Belgravia.

I don't know whither we go from this, and, except in the hope of hearing from you, I could almost add, care as little. The governor has got so much better from the good air and the regimen, that he is now anxious to be off; while my mother, attributing his recovery to the saint's interference, wants another "Novena." Mary Anne likes the place too; and Cary, who sketches all day long, seems to enjoy it.

How the decision is to come is therefore not easy to foresee. Meanwhile, whether *here* or *there*,

Believe me your attached friend,

JAMES DODD.



I open this to say that we are "booked" for another fortnight here. My mother went to consult the Virgin about going away last night, and she — that is, the saint — gave such a sneeze that my mother fainted, and was carried home insensible. The worst of all this is that Father Giacomo — our guide in spirituals — insists on my mother's publishing a little tract on her experiences; and the women are now hard at work with pen and ink at a small volume to be called "St. Agatha of Orsaro," by Jemima D——. They have offered half a florin apiece for good miracles, but they are pouring in so fast they'll have to reduce the tariff. Tiverton recommends them to ask thirteen to the dozen.

The governor is furious at this authorship, which will cost some five-and-twenty pounds at the least!

LETTER XXII.

MRS. DODD TO MRS. MARY GALLAGHER.

Hôtel Feder, Genoa.

My dear Molly, — It 's little that piety and holy living assists us in this wicked world, as you 'll allow, when I tell you that after all my penances, my mortifications, and my self-abstainings, instead of enjoyment and pleasure, as I might reasonably look for in this place, I never knew real misery and shame till I came here. I would n't believe anybody that said people was always as bad as they are now! Sure, if they were, why would n't we be prepared for their baseness and iniquity? Why would we be deceived and cheated at every hand's turn? It 's all balderdash to pretend it, Molly. The world must be coming to an end, for this plain reason, that it 's morally impossible it can be more corrupt, more false, and more vicious than it is.

I 'm trying these three days to open my heart to you. I 've taken ether, and salts, and neumonia — I think the man called it — by the spoonfuls, just to steady my nerves, and give me strength to tell you my afflictions; and now I 'll just begin, and if my tears does n't blot out the ink, I 'll reveal my sorrows, and open my breast before you.

We left that blessed village of Orsaro two days after I wrote to you by the Earl of Guzeberry, and came on here, by easy stages, as we were obliged to ride mules for more than half the way. Our journey was, of course, fatiguing, but unattended by any other inconvenience than K. I.'s usual temper about the food, the beds, and the hotel charges as we came along. He would n't fast, nor do a single penance on the road; nor would he join in chanting a Litany with Father James, but threatened to sing "Nora Chrina," if we did n't stop. And though Lord George was greatly shocked, James was just as bad as his father. Father Giacomo kept whispering to me from time to time, "We 'll come to grief for this. We 'll have to pay for all this impiety, Mrs. D.;" till at last he got my nerves in such a state that I thought we 'd be swept away at every blast of wind from the mountains, or carried down by every torrent that crossed the road. I could n't pass a bridge without screeching; and as to fording a stream, it was an attack of hysterics. These, of course, delayed us greatly, and it was a good day when we got over eight miles. For all that, the girls seemed to like it. Cary had her sketch-book always open; and Mary Anne used to go fishing with Lord G. and James, and contrived, as she said, to make the time pass pleasantly enough.

I saw very little of K. I., for I was always at some devotional exercise; and, indeed, I was right glad of it, for his chief amusement was getting Father James into an argument, and teasing and insulting him so that I only wondered why he did n't leave us at once and forever. He never ceased, too, gibing and jeering about the miracles of Orsaro; and one night, when he had got quite beyond all bounds, laughing at Father G., he told him, "Faith," says he, "you 're the most credulous man ever I met in my life; for it seems to me that you can believe anything but the Christian religion."

From that moment Father G. only shook his hands at him, and would n't discourse.

This is the way we got to Genoa, where, because we arrived at night, they kept us waiting outside the gates of the town till the commandant of the fortress had examined our passports; K. I. all the while abusing the authorities, and blackguarding the governor in a way that would have cost us dear, if it was n't that nobody could understand his Italian.

That was n't all, for when we got to the hotel, they said that all the apartments had been taken before Lord George's letter arrived, and that there was n't a room nor a pantry to be had in the whole city at any price. In fact, an English family had just gone off in despair to Chiavari, for even the ships in the harbor were filled with strangers, and the "steam dredge" was fitted up like an hotel! K. I. took down the list of visitors, to see if he could find a friend or an acquaintance amongst them, but, though there were plenty of English, we knew none of them; and as for Lord G., though he was acquainted with nearly all the titled people, they were always relatives or connections with whom he was n't "on terms." While we sat thus at the door, holding our council of war, with sleepy waiters and a sulky porter, a gentleman passed in, and went by us, up the stairs, before we could see his face. The landlord, who lighted him all the way himself, showed that he was a person of some consequence. K. I. had just time to learn that he was "No. 4, the grand apartment on the first floor, towards the sea," which was all they knew, when the landlord came down, smiling and smirking, to say that the occupant of No. 4 felt much pleasure in putting half his suite of rooms at our disposal, and hoped we might not decline his offer.

"Who is it? — who is he?" cried we all at once; but the landlord made such a mess of the English name that we were obliged to wait till we could read it in the Strangers' Book. Meanwhile we lost not a second in installing ourselves in what I must call a most princely apartment, with mirrors on all sides, fine pictures, china, and carved furniture, giving the rooms the air of a palace. There was a fine fire in the great drawing-room, and the table was littered with English newspapers and magazines, which proved that he had just left the place for us, as he was himself occupying it.

"Now for our great Unknown," said Lord George, opening the Strangers' Book, and running his eye down the list. There was Milor Hubbs and Miladi, Baron this, Count that, the "Vescovo" di Kilmore, with the "Vescova" and five "Vescovini," — that meant the Bishop and his wife, and the five small little Bishops, — which made us laugh. And at last we came down to "No. 4, Grand Suite, Sir Morris Penrhyn, Bt.," not a word more.

"There is a swell of that name that owns any amount of slate quarries down near Holyhead, I think," said Lord George. "Do you happen to know him?"

"No," was chorused by all present.

"Oh! every one knows his place. It 's one of the show things of the neighborhood. How is this they call it, — Pwlldmmolly Castle? — that 's the name, at least so far as human lips can approach it. At all events, he has nigh fifteen thousand a year, and can afford the annoyance of a consonant more or less."

"Any relative of your Lordship's?" asked K. I.

"Don't exactly remember; but, if so, we never acknowledged him. Can't afford Welsh cousinships!"

"He 's a right civil fellow, at all events," said K. I., "and here 's his health;" for at that moment the waiter entered with the supper, and we all sat down in far better spirits than we had expected to enjoy half an hour back. We soon forgot all about our unknown benefactor; and, indeed, we had enough of our own concerns to engross our attention, for there were places to be secured for the tournament and the other great sights; for, with all the frailty of our poor natures, there we were, as hot after the vanities and pleasures of this world as if we had never done a "Novena" nor a penance in our lives!

When I went to my room, Mary Anne and I had a long conversation about the stranger, whom she was fully persuaded was a connection of Lord G.'s, and had shown us this attention solely on his account. "I can perceive," said she, "from his haughty manner, that he does n't like to acknowledge the relationship, nor be in any way bound by the tie of an obligation. His pride is the only sentiment he can never subdue! A bad 'look-out' for *me*, perhaps, mamma," said she, laughing; "but we 'll see hereafter." And with this she wished me good-night.

The next morning our troubles began, and early, too; for Father James, not making any allowance for the different life one must lead in a great city from what one follows in a little out-of-the-way place amidst mountains, expected me to go up to a chapel two miles away and hear matins, and be down at mid-day mass in the town, and then had a whole afternoon's work at the convent arranged for us, and was met by Lord George and James with a decided and, indeed, almost rude opposition. The discussion lasted till late in the morning, and might perhaps have gone on further, when K. I., who was reading his "Galignani," screamed out, "By the great O'Shea!" — a favorite exclamation of his, — "here 's a bit of news. Listen to this, Gentles, all of you: 'By the demise of Sir Walter Prichard Penrhyn, of' — I must give up the castle — 'the ancient title and large estates of the family descend to a sister's son, Captain George Morris, who formerly served in the —th Foot, but retired from the army about a year since, to reside on the Continent. The present Baronet, who will take the name of Penrhyn, will be, by this accession of fortune, the richest landed proprietor in the Principality, and may, if he please it, exercise a very powerful interest in the political world. We are, of course, ignorant of his future intentions, but we share in the generally expressed wish of all classes here, that the ancient seat of his ancestors may not be left unoccupied, or only tenanted by those engaged in exhibiting to strangers its varied treasures in art, and its unrivalled curiosities in antiquarian lore. — *Welsh Herald.*' There 's the explanation of the civility we met with last night; that clears up the whole mystery, but, at the same time, leaves another riddle unsolved. Why did n't he speak to us on the stairs? Could it be that he did not recognize us?"

Oh, Molly! I nearly fainted while he was speaking. I was afraid of my life he 'd look at me, and see by my changed color what was agitating me; for only think of what it was I had done, — just gone and refused fifteen thousand a year, and for the least marriageable of the two girls, since, I need n't say, that for one man that fancies Cary, there 's forty admires Mary Anne — and a baronetcy! She 'd have been my Lady, just as much as any in the peerage. I believe in my heart I could n't have kept the confession in if it had n't been that Mary Anne took my arm and led me away. Father G. followed us out of the room, and began: "Is n't it a real blessing from the Virgin on ye," said he, "that you rejected that heretic before temptation assailed ye?" But I stopped him, Molly; and at once too! I told him it was all his own stupid bigotry got us into the scrape. "What has religion to do with it?" said I. "Can't a heretic spend fifteen thousand a year; and sure if his wife can't live with him, can't she claim any-money, as they call it?"

"I hope and trust," said he, "that your backsliding won't bring a judgment on ye."

And so I turned away from him, Molly, for you may remark that there's nothing as narrow-minded as a priest when he talks of worldly matters.

Though we had enough on our minds the whole day about getting places for the tournament, the thought of Morris never left my head; and I knew, besides, that I'd never have another day's peace with K. I. as long as I lived, if he came to find out that I refused him. I thought of twenty ways to repair the breach: that I'd write to him, or make Mary Anne write — or get James to call and see him. Then it occurred to me, if we should make out that Cary was dying for love of him, and it was to save our child that we condescended to change our mind. Mary Anne, however, overruled me in everything, saying, "Rely upon it, mamma, we'll have him yet. If he was a very young man, there would be no chance for us, but he is five or six and thirty, and he'll not change now! For a few months or so, he'll try to bully himself into the notion of forgetting her, but you'll see he'll come round at last; and if he should not, then it will be quite time enough to see whether we ought to pique his jealousy or awaken his compassion."

She said much more in the same strain, and brought me round completely to her own views. "Above all," said she, "don't let Father James influence you; for though it's all right and proper to consult him about the next world, he knows no more than a child about the affairs of this one." So we agreed, Molly, that we'd just wait and see, of course keeping K. I. blind all the time to what we were doing.

The games and the circus, and all the wonderful sights that we were to behold, drove everything else out of my head; for every moment Lord George was rushing in with some new piece of intelligence about some astonishing giant, or some beautiful creature, so that we hadn't a moment to think of anything.

It was the hardest thing in life to get places at all. The pit was taken up with dukes and counts and barons, and the boxes rose to twenty-five Napoleons apiece, and even at that price it was a favor to get one! Early and late Lord George was at work about it, calling on ministers, writing notes, and paying visits, till you 'd think it was life and death were involved in our success.

You have no notion, Molly, how different these matters are abroad and with us. At home we go to a play or a circus just to be amused for the time, and we never think more of the creatures we see there than if they were n't of our species; but abroad it 's exactly the reverse. Nothing else is talked of, or thought of, but how much the tenor is to have for six nights. "Is Carlotta singing well? Is Nina fatter? How is Francesca dancing? Does she do the little step like a goat this season? or has she forgotten her rainbow spring?" Now, Lord George and James gave us no peace about all these people till we knew every bit of the private history of them, from the man that carried a bull on his back, to the small child with wings, that was tossed about for a shuttlecock by its father and uncle. Then there was a certain Sofia Bettrame, that everybody was wild about; the telegraph at one time saying she was at Lyons, then she was at Vichy, then at Mont Cenis, — now she was sick, now she was supping with the Princess Odelzeffska,— and, in fact, what between the people that were in *love* with *her*, and a number of others to whom she was *in debt*, it was quite impossible to hear of anything else but "La Sofia," "La Bettrame," from morning till night. It 's long before an honest woman, Molly, would engross so much of public notice; and so I could n't forbear remarking to K. I.

Nobody cared to ask where the Crown Prince of Russia was going to put up, or where the Archduchess of Austria was staying, but all were eager to learn if the "Croce di Matta" or the "Leone d'Oro" or the "Cour de Naples" were to lodge the peerless Sofia. The man that saw her horses arrive was the fashion for two entire days, and an old gentleman who had talked with her courier got three dinner invitations on the strength of it. What discussions there were whether she was to receive a hundred thousand francs, or as many crowns; and then whether for one or for two nights. Then there were wagers about her age, her height, the color of her eyes, and the height of her instep, till I own to you, Molly, it was downright offensive to the mother of a family to listen to what went on about her; James being just as bad as the rest.

At last, my dear, comes the news that Sofia has taken a sulk and won't appear. The Grand-Duchess of somewhere did something, or did n't do it — I forget which — that was or was not "due to her." I wish you saw the consternation of the town at the tidings. If it was the plague was announced, the state of distraction would have been less.

You would n't believe me if I told you how they took it to heart. Old generals with white moustaches, fat, elderly gentlemen in counting-houses, grave shopkeepers, and grim-looking clerks in the Excise went about as if they had lost their father, and fallen suddenly into diminished circumstances. They shook hands, when they met, with a deep sigh, and parted with a groan, as if the occasion was too much for their feelings.

At this moment, therefore, after all the trouble and expense, nobody knows if there will be any tournament at all. Some say it is the Government has found out that the whole thing was a conspiracy for a rising; and there are fifty rumors afloat about Mazzini himself being one of the company, in the disguise of a juggler. But what may be the real truth it is impossible to say. At all events, I 'll not despatch this till I can give you the latest tidings.

Tuesday Evening.

The telegraph has just brought word that SHE *will* come. James is gone down to the office to get a copy of the despatch.

James is come back to say that she is at Novi. If she arrive here to-night, there will be an illumination of the town! Is not this too bad, Molly? Does n't your blood run cold at the thought of it all?

They 're shouting like mad under my window now, and Lord George thinks she must be come already. James has come in with his hat in tatters and his coat in rags. The excitement is dreadful. The people suspect that the Government are betraying them to Russia, and are going to destroy a palace that belongs to a tallow merchant.

All is right, Molly. She is come! and they are serenading her now under the windows of the "Croce di Matta!"

Wednesday Night.

If my trembling hand can subscribe legibly a few lines, it is perhaps the last you will ever receive from your attached Jemima. I was never intended to go through such trials as these; and they 're now rending a heart that was only made for tenderness and affection.

We were there, Molly! After such a scene of crushing and squeezing as never was equalled, we got inside the circus, and with the loss of my new turban and one of my "plats," we reached our box, within two of the stage, and nearly opposite the King. For an hour or so, it was only fainting was going on all around us, with the heat and the violent struggle to get in. Nobody minded the stage at all, where they were doing the same kind of thing we used to see long ago. Ten men in pinkish buff, vaulting over an old white horse, and the clown tumbling over the last of them with a screech; the little infant of three years, with a strap round its waist, standing and tottering on the horse's back; the man with the brass balls and the basin, and the other one that stood on the bottles, — all passed off tiresome enough, till a grand flourish of trumpets announced Signor Annibale, the great Modern Hercules. In he rode, Molly, full gallop, all dressed in a light, flesh-colored web, and looking so like naked that I screeched out when I saw him. His hair was divided on his forehead, and cut short all round the head; and, indeed, I must confess he was a fine-looking man. After a turn or two, brandishing a big club, he galloped in again, but quickly reappeared with a woman lying over one of his arms, and her hair streaming down half-way to the ground. This was Sofia; and you may guess the enthusiasm of the audience at her coming! There she lay, like in a trance, as he dashed along at full speed, the very tip of one foot only touching the saddle, and her other leg dangling down like dead. It was shocking to hear the way they talked of her symmetry and her shape, —

not but they saw enough to judge of it, Molly! — till at last the giant stopped to breathe a little just under our box. K. I. and the young men, of course, leaned over to have a good look at her with their glasses, when suddenly James screamed, "By the —— " — I won't say what — "it is herself!" Mary Anne and I both rose together. The sight left my eyes, Molly, for she looked up at me, and who was it — but the Countess that James was going to marry! There she was, lying languidly on the giant, smiling up at us as cool as may be. I gave a screech, Molly, that made the house ring, and went off in Mary Anne's arms.

If this is n't disgrace enough to bring me to the grave, Nature must have given stronger feelings than she knows to your ever afflicted and heart-broken

JEMIMA DODD.

LETTER XXIII.

MISS CAROLINE DODD TO MISS COX, AT MISS MINCING'S ACADEMY, BLACK ROCK, IRELAND.

SESTRI, GULF OF GENOA.

MY DEAR MISS COX, — I had long looked forward to our visit to Genoa in order to write to you. I had fancied a thousand things of the "Superb City" which would have been matters of interest, and hoped that many others might have presented themselves to actual observation. But with that same fatality by which the future forever evades us, we have come and gone again, and really seen nothing.

Instead of a week or fortnight passed in loitering about these mysterious, narrow streets, each one of which is a picture, poking into crypts, and groping along the aisles of those dim churches, and then issuing forth into the blaze of sunshine to see the blue sea heaving in mighty masses on the rocky shore, we came here to see some vulgar spectacle of a circus or a tournament. By ill-luck, too, even this pleasure has proved abortive; a very mortifying, I might say humiliating, discovery awaited us, and we have, for shame's sake, taken our refuge in flight from one of the most interesting cities in the whole peninsula.

I am ashamed to confess to you how ill I have borne the disappointment. The passing glimpses I caught here and there of steep old alleys, barely wide enough for three to go abreast; the little squares, containing some quaint monument or some fantastic fountain; the massive iron gateways, showing through the bars the groves of orange-trees within; the wide portals, opening on great stairs of snow-white marble, — all set me a-dreaming of that proud Genoa, with its merchant-princes, who combined all the haughty characteristics of a feudal state with the dashing spirit of a life of enterprise.

The population, too, seemed as varied in type as the buildings around them. The bronzed, deep-browed Ligurian — the "Faquino" — by right of birth, stood side by side with the scarcely less athletic Dalmatian. The Arab from Tiflis, the Suliote, the Armenian, the dull-eyed Moslem, and the treacherous-looking Moor were all grouped about the Mole, with a host of those less picturesque figures that represent Northern Europe. There, was heard every language and every dialect. There, too, seen the lineaments of every nation, and the traits of every passion that distinguish a people. Just as on the deep blue water that broke beside them were ships of every build, from the proud three-decker to the swift "lateen," and from the tall, taper spars of the graceful clipper to the heavily rounded, low-masted galliot of the Netherlands.

I own to you that however the actual life of commerce may include commonplace events and commonplace people, there is something about the sea and those that live on the great waters that always has struck me as eminently poetical.

The scene, the adventurous existence, the strange far-away lands they have visited, the Spice Islands of the South, the cold shores of the Arctic Seas, the wondrous people with whom they have mingled, the dangers they have confronted, — all invest the sailor with a deep interest to me, and I regard him ever as one who has himself been an actor in the great drama of which I have only read the outline.

I was, indeed, very sorry to leave Genoa, and to leave it, too, unseen. An event, however, too painful to allude to, compelled us to start at once; and we came on here to the little village from whence I write. A lovely spot it is, — sheltered from the open sea by a tall promontory, wooded with waving pines, whose feathery foliage is reflected in the calm sea beneath. A gentle curve of the strand leads to Chiavari, another town about six miles off; and behind us, landward, rise the great Apennines, several thousand feet in height, — grand, barren, volcanic-looking masses of wildest outline, and tinted with the colors of every mineral ore. On the very highest pinnacles of these are villages perched, and the tall tower of a church is seen to rise against the blue sky, at an elevation, one would fancy, untrodden by man.

There is a beautiful distinctness in Italian landscape, — every detail is "picked out" sharply. The outline of every rock and cliff, of every tree, of every shrub, is clean and well defined. Light and shadow fall boldly, and even abruptly, on the eye; but — shall I own it? — I long for the mysterious distances, the cloud-shadows, the vague atmospheric tints of our Northern lands. I want those passing effects that seem to give a vitality to the picture, and make up something like a story of the scene. It is in these the mind revels as in a dreamland of its own. It is from these we conjure up so many mingled thoughts of the past, the present, and the coming time, — investing the real with the imaginary, and blending the ideal with the actual world.

How naturally do all these thoughts lead us to that of Home! Happily for us, there is that in the religion of our hearts towards home that takes no account of the greater beauty of other lands. The loyalty we owe our own hearth defies seduction. Admire, glory in how you will the grandest scene the sun ever set upon, there is still a holy spot in your heart of hearts for some little humble locality, — a lonely glen, — a Highland tarn, — a rocky path beside some winding river, rich in its childish memories, redolent of the bright hours of sunny infancy, — and this you would not give for the most gorgeous landscapes that ever basked beneath Italian sky.

Do not fancy that I repine at being here because I turn with fond affection to the scene of my earliest days. I delight in Italy; I glory in its splendor of sky and land and water. I never weary of its beauteous vegetation, and my ear drinks in with equal pleasure the soft accents of its language; but I always feel that these things are to be treasured for memory to be enjoyed hereafter, just as the emigrant labors for the gold he is to spend in his own country. In this wise, it may be, when wandering along some mountain "boreen" at home, sauntering of a summer's eve through some waving meadow, that Italy in all its brightness will rise before me, and I will exult in my heart to have seen the towers of the Eternal City, and watched the waves that sleep in "still Sorrento."

We leave this to-morrow for Spezia, there to pass a few days; our object being to loiter slowly along till papa can finally decide whether to go back or forward: for so is it, my dearest friend, all our long-planned tour and its pleasures have resolved themselves into a hundred complications of finance and fashionable acquaintances.

One might have supposed, from our failures in these attempts, that we should have learned at least our own unfitness for success. The very mortifications we have suffered might have taught us that all the enjoyment we could ever hope to reap could not repay the price of a single defeat. Yet here we are, just as eager, just as short-sighted, just as infatuated as ever, after a world that will have "none of us," and steadily bent on storming a position in society that, if won to-morrow, we could not retain.

I suppose that our reverses in this wise must have attained some notoriety, and I am even prepared to hear that the Dodd family have made themselves unhappily conspicuous by their unfortunate attempt at greatness; but I own, dearest friend, that I am not able to contemplate with the same philosophical submission the loss of good men's esteem and respect, to which these failures must expose us, — an instance of which, I tremble to think, has already occurred to us.

You have often heard me speak of Mrs. Morris, and of the kindness with which she treated me during a visit at her house. She was at that time in what many would have called very narrow circumstances, but which by consummate care and good management sufficed to maintain a condition in every way suitable to a gentlewoman. She has since — or rather her son has — succeeded to a very large fortune and a title. They were at Genoa when we arrived there, — at the same hotel, — and yet never either called on or noticed us! It is perfectly needless for me to say that I know, and know thoroughly, that no change in *their* position could have produced any alteration in their manner towards us. If ever there were people totally removed from such vulgarity, — utterly incapable of even conceiving it, — it is the Morrises. They were proud in their humble fortune, — that is, they possessed a dignified self-esteem, that would have rejected the patronage of wealthy pretension, but willingly accepted the friendship of very lowly worth; and I can well believe that prosperity will only serve to widen the sphere of their sympathies, and make them as generous in action as they were once so in thought. That their behavior to *us* depends on anything in themselves, I therefore completely reject, — this I know and feel to be an impossibility. What a sad alternative is then left me, when I own that they have more than sufficient cause to shun our acquaintance and avoid our intimacy!

The loss of such a friend as Captain Morris might have been to James is almost irreparable; and from the interest he once took in him, it is clear he felt well disposed for such a part; and I am thoroughly convinced that even papa himself, with all his anti-English prejudices, has only to come into close contact with the really noble traits of the English character, to acknowledge their excellence and their worth. I am very far from undervaluing the great charm of manner which comes under the category of what is called "aimable." I recognize all its fascination, and I even own to an exaggerated enjoyment of its display; but shall I confess that I believe that it is this very habit of simulation that detracts from the truthful character of a people, and that English bluntness is — so to say — the complement of English honesty. That they push the characteristic too far, and that they frequently throw a chill over social intercourse, which under more genial influences had been everything that was agreeable, I am free to admit; but, with all these deficiencies, the national character is incomparably above that of any other country I have any knowledge of. It will be scarcely complimentary if I add, after all this, that we Irish are certainly more popular abroad than our Saxon relatives. We are more compliant with foreign usages, less rigid in maintaining our own habits, more conciliating in a thousand ways; and both our tongues and our temperaments more easily catch a new language and a new tone of society.

Is it not fortunate for you that I am interrupted in these gossipings by the order to march? Mary Anne has come to tell me that we are to start in half an hour; and so, adieu till we meet at Spezia.

SPEZIA, CROCE DI MALTA.

The little sketch that I send with this will give you some very faint notion of this beautiful gulf, with which I have as yet seen nothing to compare. This is indeed Italy. Sea, sky, foliage, balmy air, the soft influences of an atmosphere perfumed with a thousand odors, — all breathe of the glorious land.

The Garden — a little promenade for the townspeople, that stretches along the beach — is one blaze of deep crimson flowers, — the blossom of the San Giuseppe, — I know not the botanical name. The blue sea — and such a blue! — mirrors every cliff and crag and castellated height with the most minute distinctness. Tall lateen-sailed boats glide swiftly to and fro; and lazy oxen of gigantic size drag rustling wagons of loaded vines along, the ruddy juice staining the rich earth as they pass.

Como was beautiful; but there was — so to say — a kind of trim coquetry in its beauty that did not please me. The villas, the gardens, the terraced walks, the pillared temples, seemed all the creations of a landscape-gardening spirit that eagerly profited by every accidental advantage of ground, and every casual excellence of situation. Now, here there is none of this. All that man has done here had been even better left undone. It is in the jutting promontories of rock-crowned olives, — the landlocked, silent bays, darkened by woody shores, — the wild, profuse vegetation, where the myrtle, the cactus, and the arbutus blend with the vine, the orange, and the fig, — the sea itself, heaving as if oppressed with perfumed languor, — and the tall Apennines, snow-capped, in the distance, but whiter still in the cliffs of pure Carrara marble, — it is in these that Spezia maintains its glorious superiority, and in these it is indeed unequalled.

It will sound, doubtless, like a very ungenerous speech, when I say that I rejoice that this spot is so little visited — so little frequented — by those hordes of stray and straggling English who lounge about the Continent. I do not say this in any invidious spirit, but simply in the pleasure that I feel in the quiet and seclusion of a place which, should it become by any fatality "the fashion," will inevitably degenerate by all the vulgarities of the change. At present the Riviera — as the coast-line from Genoa to Pisa is called — is little travelled. The steamers passing to Leghorn by the cord of the arch, take away nearly all the tourists, so that Spezia, even as a bathing-place, is little resorted to by strangers. There are none, not one, of the ordinary signs of the watering-place about it. Neither donkeys to hire, nor subscription concerts; not a pony phaeton, a pianist, nor any species of human phenomenon to torment you; and the music of the town band is, I rejoice to say, so execrably bad that even a crowd of twenty cannot be mustered for an audience.

Spezia is, therefore, *au naturel*, — and long may it be so! Distant be the day when frescoed buildings shall rise around, to seduce from its tranquil scenery the peaceful lover of nature, and make of him the hot-cheeked gambler or the broken debauchee. I sincerely, hopefully trust this is not to be, at least in our time.

We made an excursion this morning by boat to Lerici, to see poor Shelley's house, the same that Byron lived in when here. It stands in the bight of a little bay of its own, and close to the sea; so close, indeed, that the waves were plashing and frothing beneath the arched colonnade on which it is built. It is now in an almost ruinous condition, and the damp, discolored walls and crumbling plaster bespeak neglect and decay.

The view from the terrace is glorious; the gulf in its entire extent is before you, and the island of Palmaria stands out boldly, with the tall headlands of Porto Venere, forming the breakwater against the sea. It was here Shelley loved to sit; here, of a summer's night, he often sat till morning, watching the tracts of hill and mountain wax fainter and fainter, till they grew into brightness again with coming day; and it was not far from this, on the low beach of Via Reggio, that he was lost! The old fisherman who showed us the house had known him well, and spoke of his habits as one might have described those of some wayward child. The large and lustrous eyes, the long waving hair, the uncertain step, the look half timid, half daring, had made an impression so strong, that even after long years he could recall and tell of them.

It came on to blow a "Levanter" as we returned, and the sea got up with a rapidity almost miraculous. From a state of calm and tranquil repose, it suddenly became storm-lashed and tempestuous; nor was it without difficulty we accomplished a landing at Spezia. To-morrow we are to visit Porto Venere, — the scene which it is supposed suggested to Virgil his description of the Cave in which Æneas meets with Dido; and the following day we go to Carrara to see the marble quarries and the artists' studios. In fact, we are "handbooking" this part of our tour in the most orthodox fashion; and from the tame, half-effaced impressions objects suggest, of which you come primed with previous description, I can almost fancy that reading "John Murray" at your fireside at home might compensate for the fatigue and cost of a journey. It would be worse than ungrateful to deny the aid one derives from guide-books; but there is unquestionably this disadvantage in them, that they limit your faculty of admiration or disapproval. They set down rules for your liking and disliking, and far from contributing to form and educate your taste, they cramp its development by substituting criticism for instinct.

As I hope to write to you again from Florence, I'll not prolong this too tiresome epistle, but, with my most affectionate greetings to all my old schoolfellows, ask my dear Miss Cox to believe me her ever attached and devoted

CAROLINE DODD.

The Morrises arrived here last night and went on this morning, without any notice of us. They must have seen our names in the book when writing their own. Is not this more than strange? Mamma and Mary Anne seemed provoked when I spoke of it, so that I have not again alluded to the subject. I wish from my heart I could ask how *you* interpret their coldness.

LETTER XXIV.

MARY ANNE DODD TO MISS DOOLAN, OF BALLYDOOLAN.

LUCCA, PAGNINI'S HOTEL.

DEAREST KITTY, — This must be the very shortest of letters, for we are on the wing, and shall be for some days to come. Very few words, however, will suffice to tell you that we have at length persuaded papa to come on to Florence, — for the winter, of course. Rome will follow, — then Naples, — *e poi?* — who knows! I think he must have received some very agreeable tidings from your uncle Purcell, for he has been in better spirits than I have seen him latterly, and shows something like a return to his old vein of pleasantry. Not but I must own that it is what the French would call, very often, a *mauvaise plaisanterie* in its exercise, his great amusement being to decry and disparage the people of the Continent. He seems quite to forget that in every country the traveller is, and must be, a mark for knavery and cheating. His newness to the land, his ignorance, in almost all cases, of the language, his occasional mistakes, all point him out as a proper subject for imposition; and if the English come to compare notes with any Continental country, I'm not so sure we should have much to plume ourselves upon, as regards our treatment of strangers.

For our social misadventures abroad, it must be confessed that we are mainly most to blame ourselves. All the counterfeits of rank, station, and position are so much better done by foreigners than by our people, that we naturally are more easily imposed on. Now in England, for instance, it would be easier to be a duchess than to imitate one successfully. All the attributes that go to make up such a station abroad, might be assumed by any adventurer of little means and less capacity. We forget — or, more properly speaking, we do not know — this, when we come first on the Continent; hence the mistakes we fall into, and the disasters that assail us.

It would be very disagreeable for me to explain at length how what I mentioned to you about James's marriage has come to an untimely conclusion. Enough when I say that the lady was not, in any respect, what she had represented herself, and my dear brother may be said to have had a most fortunate escape. Of course the poor fellow has suffered considerably from the disappointment, nor are his better feelings alleviated by the — I will say — very indelicate raillery papa is pleased to indulge in on the subject. It is, however, a theme I do not care to linger on, and I only thus passively allude to it that it may be buried in oblivion between us.

We came along here from Genoa by the seaboard, a very beautiful and picturesque road, traversing a wild range of the Apennines, and almost always within view of the blue Mediterranean. At Spezia we loitered for a day or two, to bathe, and I must say nothing can be more innocently primitive than the practice as followed there.

Ladies and gentlemen — men and women, if you like it better — all meet in the water as they do on land, or rather not as they do on land, but in a very first-parentage state of no-dressedness. There they splash, swim, dive, and converse, — float, flirt, talk gossip, and laugh with a most laudable forgetfulness of externals. Introductions and presentations go forward as they would in society, and a gentleman asks you to duck instead of to dance with him. It would be affectation in me were I not to say that I thought all this very shocking at first, and that I really could scarcely bring myself to adopt it; but Lord George, who really swims to perfection, laughed me out of some, and reasoned me out of others of my prejudices, and I will own, dearest Kitty, his arguments were unanswerable.

"Were you not very much ashamed," said he, "the first time you saw a ballet, or 'poses plastiques'? — did not the whole strike you as exceedingly indelicate? — and now, would not that very same sense of shame occur to you as real indelicacy, since in these exhibitions it is Art alone you admire, — Art in its graceful development? The 'Ballarina' is not a woman; she is an ideal, — she is a Hebe, a Psyche, an Ariadne, or an Aphrodite. Symmetry, grace, beauty of outline, — these are the charms that fascinate you. Can you not, therefore, extend this spirit to the sea, and, instead of the Marquis of this and the Countess of that, only behold Tritons and sea-nymphs disporting in the flood?"

I saw at once the force of this reasoning, Kitty, and perceived that to take any lower view of the subject would be really a gross indelicacy. I tried to make Cary agree with me, but utterly in vain, — she is so devoid of imagination! There is, too, an utter want of refinement in her mind positively hopeless. She even confessed to me that Lord George without his clothes still seemed Lord George to her, and that no effort she could make was able to persuade her that the old Danish Minister in the black leather skull-cap had any resemblance to a river god. Mamma behaved much better; seeing that the custom was one followed by all the "best people," she adopted it at once, and though she would scream out whenever a gentleman came to talk to her, I 'm sure, with a few weeks' practice, she 'd have perfectly reconciled herself to "etiquette in the water." Should you, with your very Irish notions, raise hands and eyes at all this, and mutter, "How very dreadful! — how shocking!" and so on, I have only to remind you of what the Princess Pauline said to an English lady, who expressed her prudish horrors at the Princess having "sat for Canova in wet drapery": "Oh, it was not so disagreeable as you think; there was always a fire in the room." Now, Kitty, I make the same reply to your shocked scruples, by saying the sea was deliciously warm. Bathing is here, indeed, a glorious luxury. There is no shivering or shuddering, no lips chattering, blue-nosed, goose-skinned misery, like the home process! It is not a rush in, in desperation, a duck in agony, and a dressing in ague, but a delicious lounge, associated with all the enjoyments of scenery and society. The temperature of the sea is just sufficiently below that of the air to invigorate without chilling, like the tone of a company that stimulates without exhausting you. It is, besides, indescribably pleasant to meet with a pastime so suggestive of new themes of talk. Instead of the tiresome and trite topics of ballet and balls, and dress and diamonds, your conversation smacks of salt water, and every allusion "hath suffered a sea change." Instead of a compliment to your dancing, the flattery is now on your diving; and he who once offered his arm to conduct you to the "buffet," now proposes his company to swim out to a life-buoy!

And now let me get back to land once more, and you will begin to fancy that your correspondent is Undine herself in disguise. I was very sorry to leave Spezia, since I was just becoming an excellent swimmer. Indeed, the surgeon of an American frigate assured me that he thought "I had been raised in the Sandwich Islands," — a compliment which, of course, I felt bound to accept in the sense that most flattered me.

We passed through Carrara, stopping only to visit one or two of the studios. They had not much to interest us, the artists being for the most part copyists, and their works usually busts; busts being now the same passion with our travelling countrymen as once were oil portraits. The consequence is that every sculptor's shelves are loaded with thin-lipped, grim-visaged English women, and triple-chinned, apoplectic-looking aldermen, that contrast very unfavorably with the clean-cut brows and sharply chiselled features of classic antiquity. The English are an eminently good-looking race of people, seen in their proper costume of broadcloth and velvet. They are manly and womanly. The native characteristics of boldness, decision, and high-hearted honesty are conspicuous in all their traits; nor is there any deficiency in the qualities of tenderness and gentleness. But with all this, when they take off their neckcloths, they make but very indifferent Romans; and he who looked a gentleman in his shirt-collar becomes, what James would call, "an arrant snob" when seen in a toga. And yet they *will* do it! They have a notion that the Anglo-Saxon can do anything, — and so he can, perhaps, — the difference being whether he can *look* the character he knows so well how to *act*.

We left Carrara by a little mountain path to visit the

Bagni di Lucca, a summer place, which once, in its days of Rouge-et-Noir celebrity, was greatly resorted to. The Principality of Lucca possessed at that period, too, its own reigning duke, and had not been annexed to Tuscany. Like all these small States, without trade or commerce, its resources were mainly derived from the Court; and, consequently, the withdrawal of the Sovereign was the death-blow to all prosperity. It would be quite beyond me to speculate on the real advantages or disadvantages resulting from this practice of absorption, but pronouncing merely from externals, I should say that the small States are great sufferers. Nothing can be sadder than the aspect of this little capital. Ruined palaces, grass-grown streets, tenantless houses, and half-empty shops are seen everywhere. Poverty — I might call it misery — on every hand. The various arts and trades cultivated had been those required by, even called into existence by, the wants of a Court. All the usages of the place had been made to conform to its courtly life and existence, and now this was gone, and all the "occupation" with it! You are not perhaps aware that this same territory of Lucca supplies nearly all of that tribe of image and organ men so well known, not only through Europe, but over the vast continent of America. They are skilful modellers naturally, and work really beautiful things in "terra cotta." They are a hardy mountain race, and, like all "montagnards," have an equal love for enterprise and an attachment to home. Thus they traverse every land and sea, they labor for years long in far-away climes, they endure hardships and privations of every kind, supported by the one thought of the day when they can return home again, and when in some high-perched mountain village — some "granuolo," or "bennabbia" — they can rest from wandering, and, seated amidst their kith and kind, tell of the wondrous things they have seen in their journeyings. It is not uncommon here, in spots the very wildest and least visited, to find a volume in English or French on the shelf of some humble cottage: now it is perhaps a print, or an engraving of some English landscape, — a spot, doubtless, endeared by some especial recollection, — and not unfrequently a bird from Mexico — a bright-winged parrot from the Brazils — shows where the wanderer's footsteps have borne him, and shows, too, how even there the thoughts of home had followed.

Judged by our own experiences, these people are but scantily welcomed amongst us. They are constantly associated in our minds with intolerable hurdy-gurdies and execrable barrel-organs. They are the nightmare of invalids, and the terror of all studious heads, and yet the wealth with which they return shows that their gifts are both acknowledged and rewarded. It must be that to many the organ-man is a pleasant visitor, and the image-hawker a vendor of "high art." I have seen a great many of them since we came here, and in their homes too; for mamma has taken up the notion that these excellent people are all living in a state of spiritual darkness and destitution, and to enlighten them has been disseminating her precious little volume on the Miracles of Mount Orsaro. It is plain to me that all this zeal of a woman of a foreign nation seems to them a far more miraculous manifestation than anything in her little book, and they stare and wonder at her in a way that plainly shows a compassionate distrust of her sanity.

It is right I should say that Lord George thinks all these people knaves and vagabonds; and James says they are a set of smugglers, and live by contraband. Whatever be the true side of the picture, I must now leave to your own acuteness, or rather to your prejudices, which for all present purposes are quite good enough judges to decide.

Papa likes this place so much that he actually proposed passing the winter here, for "cheapness," — a very horrid thought, but which, fortunately, Lord George averted by a private hint to the landlord of the inn, saying that papa was rolling in wealth, but an awful miser; so that when the bill made its appearance, with everything charged double, papa's indignation turned to a perfect hatred of the town and all in it: the consequence is that we are to-morrow to leave for Florence, which, if but one half of what Lord George says be true, must be a real earthly paradise. Not that I can possibly doubt him, for he has lived there two, or, I believe, three winters, — knows everybody and everything. How I long to see the Cascini, the Court Balls, the Private Theatricals, at Prince Polywkowsky's, the picnics at Fiesole, and those dear receptions at Madame della Montanare's, where, as Lord G. says, every one goes, and "there 's no absurd cant heard about character."

Indeed, to judge from Lord G.'s account, Florence — to use his own words — is "the most advanced city in Europe;" that is to say, the Florentines take a higher and more ample view of social philosophy than any other people. The erring individual in our country is always treated like the wounded crow, — the whole rookery is down upon him at once. Not so here; he — or *she*, to speak more properly — is tenderly treated and compassionated; all the little blandishments of society showered on her. She is made to feel that the world is really not that ill-natured thing sour moralists would describe it; and even if she feel indisposed to return to safer paths, the perilous ones are made as pleasant for her as it is possible. These are nearly his own words, dearest, and are they not beautiful? so teeming with delicacy and true charity. And oh! Kitty, I must say these are habits we do not practise at home in our own country. But of this more hereafter; for the present, I can think of nothing but the society of this delightful city, and am trying to learn off by heart the names of all the charming houses in which he is to introduce us. He has written, besides, to various friends in England for letters for us, so that we shall be unquestionably better off here — socially speaking — than in any other city of the Continent.

We leave this after breakfast to-morrow; and before the end of the week it is likely you may hear from me again, for I am longing to give you my first impressions of Firenza la Bella; till when, I am, as ever, your dearly attached

MARY ANNE DODD.

P. S. Great good fortune, Kitty, — we shall arrive in time for the races. Lord G. has got a note from Prince Pincecotti, asking him to ride his horse "Bruise-drog," — which, it seems, is the Italian for "Bull-dog," — and he consents. He is to wear my colors, too, dearest, — green and white, — and I have promised to make him a present of his jacket. How handsome he *will* look in jockey dress!

James is in distraction at being too heavy for even a hurdle-race; but as he is six feet one, and stout in proportion, it is out of the question. Lord G. insists upon it that Cary and I must go on horseback. Mamma agrees with him, and papa as stoutly resists. It is in vain we tell him that all depends on the way we open the campaign here, and that the present opportunity is a piece of rare good fortune; he is in one of his obstinate moods, and mutters something about "beggars on horseback," and the place they "ride to."

I open my letter to say — carried triumphantly, dearest — we *are* to ride.

LETTER XXV.

JAMES DODD TO ROBERT DOOLAN, ESQ., TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

HÔTEL D'ITALIE, FLORENCE, Wednesday.

MY DEAR BOB, — Here we are going it, and in about the very "fastest" place I ever set foot in. In any other city society seems to reserve itself for evening and lamplight; but here, Bob, you make "running from the start," and keep up the pace till you come in. In the morning there 's the club, with plenty of whist; all the gossip of the town, — and such gossip too, — the real article, by Jove! — no shadowy innuendoes, no vague and half-mystified hints of a flaw here or a crack there, but home blows, my boy, with a smashed character or a ruined reputation at every stroke. This is, however, only a breathing canter for what awaits you at the Cascini, — a sort of "promenade," where all the people meet in their carriages, and exchange confidences in scandal and invitations to tea, — the Cascini being to the club what the ballet is to the opera. After this, you have barely time to dress for dinner; which over, the opera begins. There you pay visits from box to box; learn all that is going on for the evening; hear where the prettiest women are going, and where the smartest play will be found. Midnight arrives, and then — but not before — the real life of Florence begins. The dear Contessa, that never showed by daylight, at last appears in her *salon;* the charming Marchesa, whose very head-dress is a study from Titian, and whose dark-fringed eyes you think you recognize from the picture in "the Pitti," at length sails in, to receive the humble homage of — what, think you? a score of devoted worshippers, a band of chivalrous adorers? Nothing of the kind, Bob: a dozen or so of young fellows, in all manner of costumes, and all shapes of beards and moustaches; all smoking cigars or cigarettes, talking, singing, laughing, thumping the piano, shouting choruses, playing tricks with cards, — all manner of tomfoolery, in fact; with a dash of enthusiasm in the nonsense that carries you along in spite of yourself. The conversation — if one can dare to call it such — is a wild chaos of turf-talk, politics, scandal, literature, buffoonery, and the ballet. There is abundance of wit, — plenty of real smartness on every side. The fellows who have just described the cut of a tucker can tell you accurately the contents of a treaty; and they who did not seem to have a thought above the depth of a flounce or the width of a sandal, are thoroughly well versed in the politics of every State of Europe. There is no touch of sarcasm in their gayety, — none of that refined, subtle ridicule that runs through a Frenchman's talk; these fellows are eminently good-natured: the code of morals is not severe, and hence the secret of the merciful judgments you hear pronounced on every one.

As to breeding, we English should certainly say there was an excess of familiarity. Everybody puts his arm on your shoulder, pats you on the back, and calls you by your Christian name. I am "Giacomo" to a host of fellows I don't know by name; and "Gemess" to a select few, who pride themselves on speaking English. At all events, Bob, there is no constraint, — no reserve amongst them. You are at your ease at once, and good fellowship is the order of the day.

As to the women, they have a half-shy, half-confident look, that puzzles one sadly. They 'll stand a stare from you most unblushingly; they think it 's all very right and very reasonable that you should look at them as long and as fixedly as you would do at a Raffaelle in the Gallery: but with all that, there is a great real delicacy of deportment, and those coram-publico preferences which are occasionally exhibited in England, and even in France, are never seen in Italian society. As to good looks, there is an abundance, but of a character which an Englishman at first will scarcely accept as beauty. They are rarely handsome by feature, but frequently beautiful by expression. There is, besides, a graceful languor, a tender Cleopatra-like voluptuousness in their air that distinguishes them from other women; and I have no doubt that any one who has lived long in Italy would pronounce French smartness and coquetry the very essence of vulgarity. They cannot dress like a Parisian, nor waltz like a Wienerin; but, to my thinking, they are far more captivating than either. I am already in love with four, and I have just heard of a fifth, that I am sure will set me downright distracted. There 's one thing I like especially in them; and I own to you, Bob, it would compensate to me for any amount of defects, which I believe do not pertain to them. It is this: they have no accomplishments, — they neither murder Rossini, nor mar Salvator Rosa; they are not educated to torment society, poison social intercourse, and push politeness to its last entrenchment. You are not called on for silence while they scream, nor for praise when they paint. They do not convert a drawing-room into a boarding-school on examination-day, and they are satisfied to charm you by fascinations that cost you no compromise to admire.

After all, I believe we English are the only people that adopt the other plan. We take a commercial view of the matter, and having invested so much of our money in accomplishment, we like to show our friends that we have made a good speculation. For myself, I 'd as soon be married to a musical snuff-box or a daguerreotype machine as to a "well-brought-up English girl," who had always the benefit of the best masters in music and drawing. The fourth-rate artist in anything is better than the first-rate amateur; and I 'd just as soon wear home-made shoes as listen to home-made music.

I have not been presented in any of the English houses here as yet. There is some wonderful controversy going forward as to whether we are to call first, or to wait to be called on; and I begin to fear that the Carnival will open before it can be settled. The governor, too, has got into a hot controversy with our Minister here, about our presentation at Court. It would appear that the rule is, you should have been presented at home, in order to be eligible for presentation abroad. Now, we have been at the Castle, but never at St. James's. The Minister, however, will not recognize reflected royalty; and here we are, suffering under a real Irish grievance O'Connell would have given his eye for. The fun of it is that the Court — at least, I hear so — is crammed with English, who never even saw a Viceroy, nor perhaps partook of the high festivities of a Lord Mayor's Ball. How they got there is not for me to inquire, but I suppose that a vow to a chamberlain is like a custom-house oath, and can always be reconciled to an easy conscience.

We have arrived here at an opportune moment, — time to see all the notorieties of the place at the races, which began to-day. So far as I can learn, the foreigners have adopted the English taste, with the true spirit of imitators; that is, they have given little attention to any improvement in the breed of cattle, but have devoted considerable energy to all the rogueries of the ring, and with such success that Newmarket and Doncaster might still learn something from the "Legs" of the Continent.

Tiverton, who is completely behind the scenes, has told me some strange stories about their doings; and, at the very moment I am writing, horses are being withdrawn, names scratched, forfeits declared, and bets pronounced "off," with a degree of precipitation and haste that shows how little confidence exists amongst the members of the ring. As for myself, not knowing either the course, the horses, nor the colors of the riders, I take my amusement in observing — what is really most laughable — the absurd effort made by certain small folk here to resemble the habits and ways of certain big ones in England. Now it is a retired coachmaker, or a pensioned-off clerk in a Crown office, that jogs down the course, betting-book in hand, trying to look — in the quaintness of his cob, and the trim smugness of his groom — like some old county squire of fifteen thousand a year. Now it is some bluff, middle-aged gent, who, with coat thrown back and thumbs in his waistcoat, insists upon being thought Lord George Bentinck. There are Massy Stanleys, George Paynes, Lord Wiltons, and Colonel Peels by dozens; "gentlemen jocks" swathed in drab paletots, to hide the brighter rays of costume beneath, gallop at full speed across the grass on ponies of most diminutive size; smartly got-up fellows stand under the judge's box, and slang the authorities above, or stare at the ladies in front. There are cold luncheons, sandwiches, champagne, and soda-water; bets, beauties, and bitter beer, — everything, in short, that constitutes races, but horses! The system is that every great man gives a cup, and wins it himself; the only possible interest attending such a process being whether, in some paroxysm of anger at this, or some frump at that, he may not withdraw his horse at the last moment, — an event on which a small knot of gentlemen with dark eyes, thick lips, and aquiline noses seem to speculate as a race chance, and only second in point of interest to a whist party at the Casino with a couple of newly come "Bulls." A more stupid proceeding, therefore, than these races — bating always the fun derived from watching the "snobocracy" I have mentioned — cannot be conceived. Now it was a walk over; now a "sell;" now two horses of the same owner; now one horse that was owned by three. The private history of the rogueries might possibly amuse, but all that met the public eye was of the very slowest imaginable.

I begin to think, Bob, that horse-racing is only a sport that can be maintained by a great nation abounding in wealth, and with all the appliances of state and splendor. You ought to have gorgeous equipages, magnificent horses, thousands of spectators, stands crowded to the roof by a class such as only exists in great countries. Royalty itself, in all its pomp, should be there; and all that represents the pride and circumstance of a mighty people. To try these things on a small scale is ridiculous, — just as a little navy of one sloop and a steamer! With great proportions and ample verge, the detracting elements are hidden from view. The minor rascalities do not intrude themselves on a scene of such grandeur; and though cheating, knavery, and fraud are there, they are not foreground figures. Now, on a little "race-course," it is exactly the reverse: just as on board of a three-decker you know nothing of the rats, but in a Nile boat they are your bedfellows and your guests at dinner.

To-morrow we are to have a match with gentlemen riders, and if anything worth recording occurs I 'll keep a corner for it. Mother is in the grand stand, with any amount of duchesses and marchionesses around her. The governor is wandering about the field, peeping at the cattle, and wondering how the riders are to get round a sharp turn at the end of the course. The girls are on horseback with Tiverton; and, in the long intervals between the matches, I jot down these rough notes for you. The scene itself is beautiful. The field, flanked on one side by the wood of the Cascini, is open on t' other to the mountains: Fiezole, from base to summit, is dotted over with villas half buried in groves of orange and olive trees. The Val d'Arno opens on one side, and the high mountain of Vallombrosa on the other. The gayly dressed and bright-costumed Florentine population throng the ground itself, and over their heads are seen the glorious domes and towers and spires of beautiful Florence, under a broad sky of cloudless blue, and in an atmosphere of rarest purity.

Thursday.

Tiverton has won his match, and with the worst horse too. Of his competitors one fell off; another never got up at all; a third bolted; and a fourth took so much out of his horse in a breathing canter before the race, that the animal was dead beat before he came to the start. And now the knowing ones are going about muttering angry denunciations on the treachery of grooms and trainers, and vowing that "Gli gentlemen riders son' grandi bricconi."

I am glad it is over. The whole scene was one of quarrelling, row, and animosity from beginning to end. These people neither know how to win money nor to lose it; and. as to the English who figure on such occasions, take my word for it, Bob, the national character gains little by their alliance. It is too soon for me, perhaps, to pronounce in this fashion, but Tiverton has told me so many little private histories — revealed so much of the secret memoirs of these folk — that I believe I am speaking what subsequent experience will amply confirm. For the present, good-bye, and believe me,

Ever yours,

JAMES DODD.

LETTER XXVI.

KENNY DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., GRANGE, BRUFF.

FLORENCE, LUNGO L'ARNO.

MY DEAR TOM, — It is nigh a month since I wrote to you last, and if I did n't "steal a few hours from the night, my dear," it might be longer still. The address will tell you where we are, — I wish anybody or anything else would tell you how or why we came here! I intended to have gone back from Genoa, nor do I yet understand what prevented me doing so. My poor head — none of the clearest in what may be called my lucid intervals — is but a very indifferent thinking machine when harassed, worried, and tormented as I have been latterly. You have heard how James's Countess, the Cardinal's niece and the betrothed of a Neapolitan Prince, turned out to be a circus woman, one of those bits of tawdry gold fringe and pink silk pantaloons that dance on a chalked saddle to a one-shilling multitude! By good fortune she had two husbands living, or she might have married the boy. As it was, he has gone into all manner of debt on her account; and if it was not that I can defy ruin in any shape, — for certain excellent reasons you may guess at, — this last exploit of his would go nigh to our utter destruction.

We hurried away out of Genoa in shame, and came on here by slow stages. The womenkind plucked up wonderfully on the way, and I believe of the whole party your humble servant alone carried abasement with him inside the gates of Florence.

My sense of sorrow and shame probably somehow blunted my faculties and dulled my reasoning powers, for I would seem to have concurred in a vast number of plans and arrangements that now, when I have come to myself, strike me with intense astonishment. For instance, we have taken a suite of rooms on the Arno, hired a cook, a carriage, and a courier; we are, I hear, also in negotiation for a box at the "Pergola," and I am credibly informed that I am myself looking out for saddle-horses for the girls, and a "stout-made, square-jointed cob of lively action," to carry myself.

It may be all true — I have no doubt it is more philosophical, as the cant phrase is — to believe Kenny Dodd to be mistaken rather than suppose his whole family deranged, so that if I hear to-morrow or next day that I 'm about to take lessons in singing, or to hire a studio as a sculptor, I 'm fully determined to accept the tidings with a graceful submission. There is only one thing, Tom Purcell, that passes my belief, and that is, that there ever lived as besotted an old fool as your friend Kenny D., a man so thoroughly alive to everything that displeased him, and yet so prone to endure it; so actively bent on going a road the very opposite to the one he wanted to travel; and that entered heart and soul into the spirit of ruining himself, as if it was the very best fun imaginable.

That you can attempt to follow me through the vagaries of this strange frame of mind is more than I expect, neither do I pretend to explain it to you. There it is, however, — make what you can of it, just as you would with a handful of copper money abroad, where there was no clew to the value of a single coin in the mass, but wherewith you are assured you have received your change.

With a fine lodging, smart liveries, a very good cook, and a well-supplied table, I thought it possible that though ruin would follow in about three months, yet in the interval I might probably enjoy a little ease and contentment. At all events, like the Indian, who, when he saw that he must inevitably go over the Falls, put his paddles quietly aside, and resolved to give himself no unnecessary trouble, I also determined I 'd leave the boat alone, and never "fash myself for the future." Wise as this policy may seem, it has not saved me. Mrs. D. is a regular storm-bird! Wherever she goes she carries her own hurricane with her! and

I verily believe she could get up a tornado under the equator.

In a little pious paroxysm that seized her in the mountains, she, at the instigation of a stupid old lord there, must needs write a tract about certain miracles that were or were not — for I'll not answer for either — performed by a saint that for many years back nobody had paid any attention to. This precious volume cost *her* three weeks' loss of rest, and *me* about thirty pounds sterling. It was, however, a pious work, and even as a kind of *visa* on her passport to heaven, I suppose it would be called cheap. I assure you, Tom, I spent the cash grudgingly; that I did pay it at all I thought was about as good "a miracle" as any in the book.

Armed with this tract, she tramped through the Lucchese mountains, leaving copies everywhere, and thrusting her volume into the hands of all who would have it. I'm no great admirer of this practice in any sect. The world has too many indiscreet people to make this kind of procedure an over-safe one; besides, I'm not quite certain that even a faulty religion is not preferable to having none at all, and it happens not unfrequently that the convert stops half-way on his road, and leaves one faith without ever reaching the other. I'll not discuss this matter further; I have trouble enough on my hands without it.

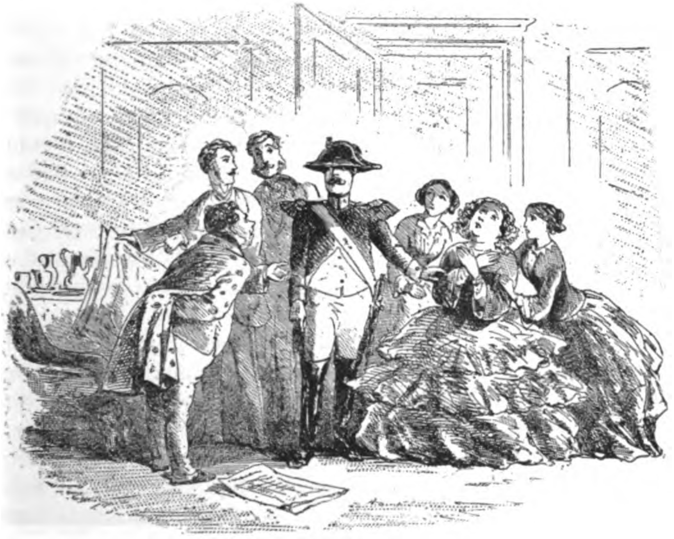
These little tracts of Mrs. D.'s attracted the attention of the authorities. It was quite enough that they had been given away gratis, and by an Englishwoman, to stamp them as attempts to proselytize, and, although they could n't explain how, yet they readily adopted the idea that the whole was written in a figurative style purposely to cover its real object, and so they set lawyers and judges to work, and what between oaths of peasants and affirmations of prefects, they soon made a very pretty case, and yesterday morning, just as we had finished breakfast, a sergeant of the gendarmerie entered the room, and with a military salute asked which was la Signora Dodd? The answer being given, he proceeded to read aloud a paper, that he held in his hand, the contents of which Cary translated for me in a whisper. They were, in fact, a judge's warrant to commit Mrs. D. to prison under no less than nine different sections of a new law on the subject of religion. In vain we assured him that we were all good Catholics, kept every ordinance of the Church, and hated a heretic. He politely bowed to our explanation, but said that with this part of the matter he had nothing to do; that doubtless we should be able to establish our innocence before the tribunal; meanwhile Mrs. D. must go to prison.

I 'm ashamed at all the warmth of indignation we displayed, seeing that this poor fellow was simply discharging his duty, — and that no pleasant one, — but somehow it is so natural to take one's anger out on the nearest official, that we certainly did n't spare him. Tiverton threatened him with the House of Commons; James menaced him with the "Times;" Mary Anne protested that the British fleet would anchor off Leghorn within forty hours; and I hinted that Mazzini should have the earliest information of this new stroke of tyranny. He bore all like — a gendarme! stroked his moustaches, clinked his sword on the ground, put his cocked-hat a little more squarely on his head, and stood at ease. Mrs. D. — there 's no guessing how a woman will behave in any exigency — did n't go off, as I thought and expected she would, in strong hysterics; she did n't even show fight; she came out in what, I am free to own, was for her a perfectly new part, and played martyr; ay, Tom, she threw up her eyes, clasped her hands upon her bosom, and said, "Lead me away to the stake — burn me — torture me — cut me in four quarters — tear my flesh off with hot pincers." She suggested a great variety of these practices, and with a volubility that showed me she had studied the subject. Meanwhile the sergeant grew impatient, declared the "séance" was over, and ordered her at once to enter the carriage that stood awaiting her at the door, and which was to convey her to the prison. I need n't dwell on a very painful scene; the end of it was that she was taken away, and though we all followed in another carriage, we were only admitted to a few moments of leave-taking with her, when the massive gates were closed, and she was a captive!

Tiverton told me I must at once go to our Legation and represent the case. "Be stout about it," said he; "say she must be liberated in half an hour. Make the Minister understand you are somebody, and won't stand any humbug. I'd go," he added, "but I can't do anything against the present Government." A knowing wink accompanied this speech, and though I didn't see the force of the remark, I winked too, and said nothing.

"What language does he speak?" said I, at last.

"Our Minister? English, of course!"



"In that case I'm off at once;" and away I drove to the Legation. The Minister was engaged. Called again, — he was out. Called later, — he was in conference with the Foreign Secretary. Later still, — he was dressing for dinner. Tipped his valet a Nap. and sent in my card, with a pressing entreaty to be admitted. Message brought back, quite impossible, — must call in the morning. Another Nap. to the flunkey, and asked his advice.

"His Excellency receives this evening, — come as one of the guests."

I didn't half like this counsel, Tom; it was rather an obtrusive line of policy, but what was to be done? I thought for a few minutes, and, seeing no chance of anything better, resolved to adopt it. At ten o'clock, then, behold me ascending a splendidly illuminated staircase, with marble statues on either side, half hid amidst all manner of rare and beautiful plants. Crowds of splendidly dressed people are wending their way upward with myself — doubtless with lighter hearts — which was not a difficult matter. At the top, I find myself in a dense crowd, all a blaze of diamonds and decorations, gorgeous uniforms and jewelled dresses of the most costly magnificence.

I assure you I was perfectly lost in wonderment and admiration. The glare of wax-lights, the splendor of the apartments themselves, and the air of grandeur on every side actually dazzled and astounded me. At each instant I heard the title of Duke and Prince given to some one or other. "Your Highness is looking better;" "I trust your Grace will dance;" "Is the Princess here?" "Pray present me to the Duchess." Egad, Tom, I felt I was really in the very centre of that charmed circle of which one hears so much and yet sees so little.

I need n't say that I knew nobody, and I own to you it was a great relief to me that nobody knew *me*. Where should I find the Minister in all this chaos of splendor, and if I did succeed, how obtain the means of addressing him? These were very puzzling questions to be solved, and by a brain turning with excitement, and half wild between astonishment and apprehension. On I went, through room after room, — there seemed no end to this gorgeous display. Here they were crushed together, so that stars, crosses, epaulettes, diamond coronets, and jewelled arms seemed all one dense mass; here they were broken into card-parties; here they were at billiards; here dancing; and here all were gathered around a splendid buffet, where the pop, pop of champagne corks explained the lively sallies of the talkers. I was not sorry to find something like refreshment; indeed, I thought my courage stood in need of a glass of wine, and so I set myself vigorously to pierce the firm and compact crowd in front of me. My resolve had scarcely been taken, when I felt a gentle but close pressure within my arm, and on looking down, saw three fingers of a white-gloved hand on my wrist.

I started back; and even before I could turn my head, Tom, I heard a gentle voice murmur in my ear, "Dear creature, — how delighted to see you! — when did you arrive?" and my eyes fell upon Mrs. Gore Hampton! There she was, in all the splendor of full dress, which, I am bound to say, in the present instance meant as small an amount of raiment as any one could well venture out in. That I never saw her look half so beautiful is quite true. Her combs of brilliants set off her glossy hair, and added new brilliancy to her eyes, while her beauteous neck and shoulders actually shone in the brightness of its tints. I bethought me of the "Splügen," Tom, and the cold insolence of her disdain. I tried to summon up indignation to reproach her, but she anticipated me, by saying, with a bewitching smile, "Adolphus is n't here now, Doddy!" Few as the words were, Tom, they revealed a whole history, — they were apology for the past, and assurance for the present. "Still," said I, "you might have —" "What a silly thing it is!" said she, putting her fan on my lips; "and it wants to quarrel with me the very moment of meeting; but it must n't and it sha'n't. Get me some supper, Doddy, — an oyster patty, if there be one, — if not, an ortolan truffé."

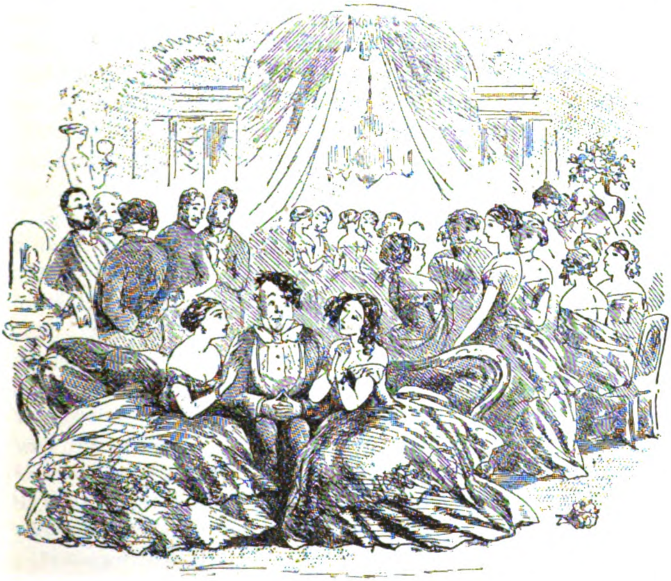
This at least was a good sensible speech, and so I wedged firmly into the mass, and, by dint of very considerable pressure, at length landed my fair friend at the buffet. It was, I must say, worth all the labor. There was everything you can think of, from sturgeon to Maraschino jelly, and wines of every land of Europe. It was a good opportunity to taste some rare vintages, and so I made a little excursion through Marcobrunner to Johannisberg, and thence on to Steinberger. Leaving the Rhine land, I coquetted awhile with Burgundy, especially Chambertin, back again, however, to Champagne, for the sake of its icy coldness, to wind up with some wonderful Schumlawer, — a Hungarian tap, — that actually made me wish I had been born a hussar.

It is no use trying to explain to *you* the tangled maze of my poor bewitched faculties. *You*, whose experiences in such trials have not gone beyond a struggle for a ham sandwich, or a chicken bone for some asthmatic old lady in black satin, — *you* can neither comprehend my situation nor compassionate my difficulties. How shall I convey to your uninformed imagination the bewitching effects of wine, beauty, heat, light, music, soft words, soft glances, blue eyes, and snowy shoulders? I may give you all the details, but you 'll never be able to blend them into that magic mass that melts the heart, and makes such fools of the Kenny Dodds of this world. There is such a thing, believe me, as "an atmosphere of enchantment." There are elements which compose a magical air around you, perfumed with odors, and still more entrancing by flatteries. The appeal is now to your senses, now to your heart, your affections, your intellect, your sympathies; your very self-love is even addressed, and you are more than man, at least more than an Irishman, if you resist.

Egad, Tom, she is a splendid woman! and has that air of gentleness and command about her that somehow subdues you at once. Her little cajoleries — those small nothings of voice and look and touch — are such subtle tempters for one admired even to homage itself.

"You must be my escort, Doddy," said she, drawing on her glove, after fascinating me by the sight of that dimpled hand, and those rose-tipped fingers so full of their own memories for me. "You shall give me your arm, and I 'll tell you who every one is." And away we sailed out of the supper-room into the crowded *salons*.

Our progress was slow, for the crush was tremendous; but, as we went, her recognitions were frequent. Still, I could not but remark, not with women. All, or nearly all, her acquaintances were of, I was going to say the harder, but upon my life I believe the real epithet would be the softer sex. They saluted her with an easy, almost too easy, familiarity. Some only smiled; and one, a scoundrel, — I shall know him again, however, — threw up his eyes with a particular glance towards me, as plainly as possible implying, "Oh, another victim, eh?" As for the ladies, some stared full at her, and then turned abruptly away; some passed without looking; one or two made her low and formal courtesies; and a few put up their glasses to scan her lace flounce or her lappets, as if *they* were really the great objects to be admired. At last we came to a knot of men talking in a circle round a very pretty woman, whose jet-black eyes and ringlets, with a high color, gave her a most brilliant appearance. The moment she saw Mrs. G. H. she sprang from her seat to embrace her. They spoke in French, and so rapidly that I could catch nothing of what passed; but the dark eyes were suddenly darted towards me with a piercing glance that made me half ashamed.



"Let us take possession of that sofa," said Mrs. Gore, moving towards one. "And now, Doddy, I want to present you to my dearest friend on earth, my own darling Georgina."

Then they both kissed, and I muttered some stupid nonsense of my own.

"This, Georgy, — this is that dear creature of whom you have heard me speak so often; this is that generous, noblehearted soul whose devotion is written upon my heart; and this," said she, turning to the other side, "this is my more than sister, — my adored Georgina!"

I took my place between them on the sofa, and was formally presented to whom? — guess you? No less a person than Lady George Tiverton! Ay, Tom, the fascinating creature with the dark orbs was another injured woman! I was not to be treated like a common acquaintance, it seemed, for "Georgy" began a recital of her husband's cruelties to me. Of all the wretches I ever heard or read he went far beyond them. There was not an indignity, not an outrage, he had not passed on her. He studied cruelties to inflict upon her. She had been starved, beaten, bruised, and, I believe, chained to a log.

She drew down her dress to show me some mark of cruelty on her shoulder; and though I saw nothing to shock me, I took her word for the injury. In fact, Tom, I was lost in wonderment how one that had gone through so much not only retained the loveliness of her looks, but all the fascinations of her beauty, unimpaired by any traits of suffering.

What a terrible story it was, to be sure! Now he had sold her diamonds to a Jew; now he had disposed of her beautiful dark hair to a wig-maker. In his reckless extravagance her very teeth were not safe in her head; but more dreadful than all were the temptations he had exposed her to, — sweet, young, artless, and lovely as she was! All the handsome fellows about town, — all that was gay, dashing, and attractive, — the young Peerage and the Blues, — all at her feet; but her saintlike purity triumphed; and it was really quite charming to hear how these two pretty women congratulated each other on all the perils they had passed through unharmed, and the dangers through which virtue had borne them triumphant. There I sat, Tom, almost enveloped in gauze and Valenciennes, — for their wide flounces encompassed me, their beauteous faces at either side, their soft breath fanning me, — listening to tales of man's infamy that made my blood boil. To the excitement of the champagne had succeeded the delirious intoxication compounded of passionate indignation and glowing admiration; and at any minute I felt ready to throw myself at the heads of the husbands or the feet of their wives!

Vast crowds moved by us as we sat there, and I could perceive that we were by no means unnoticed by the company. At last I perceived an elderly lady, leaning on a young man's arm, whom I thought I recognized; but she quickly averted her head and said something to her companion. He turned and bowed coldly to me; and I perceived it was Morris, — or Penrhyn, I suppose he calls himself now; and, indeed, his new dignity would seem to have completely overcome him. Mrs. G. H. asked his name; and when I told it, said she would permit me to present him to her, — a liberty I had no intention to profit by.

The company was now thinning fast; and so, giving an arm to each of my fair friends, we descended to the cloaking-room. "Call our carriage, Doddy, — the Villino Amaldini! for Georgy and I go together," said Mrs. G. I saw them to the door, helped them in, kissed their hands, promised to call on them early on the morrow, — "Villa Amaldini, — Via Amaldini," — got the name by heart; another squeeze of the two fair hands, and away they rolled, and I turned homeward in a frame of mind of which I have not courage to attempt the description.

When I arrived at our lodgings, it was nigh three o'clock; Mary Anne and Cary were both sitting up waiting for me. The police had made a descent on the house in my absence, and carried away three hundred and seventy copies of the blessed little tract, all our house bills, some of your letters, and the girls' Italian exercises; a very formidable array of correspondence, to which some equations in algebra, by James, contributed the air of a cipher.

"Well, papa, what tidings?" cried both the girls, as I entered the room. "When is she to be liberated? What says the Minister? — is he outrageous? — was he civil? — did he show much energy?"

"Wait a bit, my dears," said I, "and let me collect myself. After all I have gone through, my head is none of the clearest."

This was quite true, Tom, as you may readily believe. They both waited, accordingly, with a most exemplary patience; and there we sat in silence, confronting each other; and I own to you honestly, a criminal in a dock never had a worse conscience than myself at that moment.

"Girls," said I, at last, "if I am to have brains to carry me through this difficult negotiation, it will only be by giving me the most perfect peace and tranquillity. No questioning — no interrogation — no annoyance of any kind — you understand me — this," said I, touching my forehead, —"this must be undisturbed." They both looked at each other without speaking, and I went on; but what I said, and how I said it, I have no means of knowing: I dashed intrepidly into the wide sea of European politics, mixing up Mrs. D. with Mazzini, making out something like a very strong case against her. From that I turned to Turkey and the Danubian Provinces, and brought in Omer Pasha and the Earl of Guzeberry; plainly showing that their mother was a wronged and injured woman, and that Sir Somebody Dundas might be expected any moment at the mouth of the Arno, to exact redress for her wrongs. "And now," said I, winding up, "you know as much of the matter as I do, my dears; you view things from the same level as myself; and so, off to bed, and we 'll resume the consideration of the subject in the morning." I did n't wait for more, but took my candle and departed.

"Poor papa!" said Mary Anne, as I closed the door; "he talks quite wildly. This sad affair has completely affected his mind."

"He certainly *does* talk most incoherently," said Cary; "I hope we shall find him better in the morning." Ah! Tom, I passed a wretched night of self-accusation and sorrow. There was nothing Mrs. D. herself could have said to me that I did n't say. I called myself a variety of the hardest names, and inveighed stoutly against my depravity and treachery. The consequence was that I could n't sleep a wink, and rose early, to try and shake off my feverish state by a walk.

I sallied out into the streets, and half unconsciously took the way to the prison. It was one of those old feudal fortresses — half jail, half palace — that the Medici were so fond of, — grim-looking, narrow-windowed, high-battlemented buildings, that stand amidst modern edifices as a mailed knight might stand in a group of our every-day dandies. I looked up at its dark and sullen front with a heavy and self-reproaching heart. "Your wife is there, Kenny Dodd," said I, "a prisoner! — treated like a malefactor and a felon! — carried away by force, without trial or investigation, and already sentenced — for a prisoner is under sentence when even passingly deprived of liberty — and there you stand, powerless and inactive! For this you quitted a land where there is at least a law, and the appeal to it open to every one! For this you have left a country where personal liberty can be assailed neither by tyranny nor corruption! For this you have come hundreds of miles away from home, to subject yourself and those belonging to you to the miserable despotism of petty tyrants and the persecution of bigots! Why don't they print it in large letters in every passport what one has to expect in these journeyings? What nonsense it is to say that Kenny Dodd is to travel at his pleasure, and that the authorities themselves are neither to give nor 'permettre qu'il lui soit donné empêchement quelconque, mais au contraire toute aide et assistance!' Why not be frank, and say, 'Kenny Dodd comes abroad at his own proper risk and peril, to be cheated in Belgium, bamboozled in Holland, and blackguarded on the Rhine; with full liberty to be robbed in Spain, imprisoned in Italy, and knouted in Russia'? With a few such facts as these before you, you would think twice on the Tower Stairs, and perhaps deliberate a little at Dover. It 's no use making a row because foreigners do not adopt our notions. They have no Habeas Corpus, just as they have no London Stout, — maybe for the same reason, too, — it would n't suit the climate. But what brings us amongst them! There 's the question. Why do we come so far away from home to eat food that disagrees with us, and live under laws we cry out against? Is it consistent with common-sense to run amuck through the statutes of foreign nations just out of wilfulness? I wish my wife was out of that den, and I wish we were all back in Dodsborough." And with that wise reflection, uttered in all the fulness of my heart, I turned slowly away and reached the Arno. A gentleman raised his hat politely to me as I passed. I turned hastily, and saw it was Morris. His salute was a cold one, and showed no inclination for nearer acquaintance; but I was too much humiliated in my own esteem to feel pride, so I followed and overtook him. His reception of me was so chilling, Tom, that even before I spoke I regretted the step I had adopted. I rallied, however, and after reminding him how on a former occasion I had been benefited by his able intervention in my behalf, briefly told him of Mrs. D.'s arrest, and the great embarrassment I felt as to the course to be taken.

He thawed in a moment. All his distance was at once abandoned, and, kindly offering me his arm, begged me to relate what had occurred. He listened calmly, patiently, — I might almost say, coldly. He never dropped a sentence, — not a syllable like sympathy or condolence. He had n't as much as a word of honest indignation against the outrageous behavior of the authorities. In fact, Tom, he took the whole thing just as much as a matter of course as if there was nothing remarkable nor strange in imprisoning an Englishwoman, and the mother of a family. He made a few pencil notes in his pocket-book as to dates and such-like, and then, looking at his watch, said, —

"We'll go and breakfast with Dunthorpe. You know him intimately, don't you?"

I had to confess I did not know him at all.

"Oh! seeing you there last night," said he, "I thought you knew him well, as you are only a very short time in Florence."

I drew a long breath, Tom, and told him how I had happened to find myself at the Minister's "rout." He smiled good-humoredly; there was nothing offensive in it, however, and it passed off at once.

"Sir Alexander and I are old friends," said he. "We served in the same regiment once together, and I can venture to present you, even at this early hour;" and with that we walked briskly on towards the Legation.

All this while Morris — I can't call him by his new name yet — never alluded to the family; he did n't even ask after James, and I plainly saw that he was bent on doing a very good-natured thing, without any desire to incur further intimacy as its consequence.

Sir Alexander had not left his room when we arrived, but on receiving Morris's card sent word to say he should be down in a moment, and expected us both at breakfast. The table was spread in a handsome library, with every possible appliance of comfort about it. There was a brisk wood-fire blazing on the ample hearth, and a beautiful Blenheim asleep before it. Newspapers of every country and every language lay scattered about with illustrated journals and prints. Most voluptuous easy-chairs and fat-cushioned sofas abounded, and it was plain to see that the world has some rougher sides than she turns to her Majesty's Envoys and Ministers Plenipotentiary!

I was busy picturing to myself what sort of person the present occupant of this post was likely to prove, when he entered. A tall, very good-looking man, of about forty, with bushy whiskers of white hair; his air and bearing the very type of frankness, and his voice the rich tone of a manly speaker. He shook me cordially by the hand as Morris introduced me, apologized for keeping us waiting, and at once seated us at table. A sickly-looking lad, with sore eyes and a stutter, slipped unobtrusively in after him, and he was presented to us as Lord Adolphus de Maudley, the unpaid Attaché.

Leaving all to Morris, and rightly conjecturing that he would open the subject we came upon at the fitting time, I attacked a grouse-pie most vigorously, and helped myself freely to his Excellency's Bordeaux. There were all manner of good things, and we did them ample justice, even to the Unpaid himself, who certainly seemed to take out in prog what they denied him in salary.

Sir Alexander made all the running as to talk. He rattled away about Turks and Russians, — affairs home and foreign, — the Ministry and the Opposition, — who was to go next to some vacant embassy, and who was to be the prima donna at the Pergola. Then came Florence gossip, — an amusing chapter; but perhaps — as they say in the police reports — not quite fit for publication. His Excellency had seen the girls at the races, and complimented me on their good looks, and felicitated the city on the accession of so much beauty. At last Morris broke ground, and related the story of Mrs. D.'s captivity. Sir Alex — who had by this time lighted his cigar — stood with his hands in his dressing-gown pockets, and his back to the fire, the most calm and impassive of listeners.

"They are so stupid, these people," said he at last, puffing his weed between each word; "won't take the trouble to look before them — won't examine — won't investigate — a charge. Mrs. Dodd a Catholic too?"

"A most devout and conscientious one!" said I.

"Great bore for the moment, no doubt; but — try a cheroot, they 're milder — but, as I was saying, to be amply recompensed hereafter. There 's nothing they won't do in the way of civility and attention to make amends for this outrage."

"Meanwhile, as to her liberation?" said Morris.

"Ah! that *is* a puzzle. No use writing to Ministers, you know. That 's all lost time. Official correspondence — only invented to train up our youth — like Lord Dolly, there. Must try what can be done with Bradelli."

"And who is Bradelli, your Excellency?"

"Bradelli is Private Secretary to the Cardinal Boncelli, at Rome."

"But we are in Tuscany."

"Geographically speaking, so we are. But leave it to me, Mr. Dodd. No time shall be lost. Draw up a note, Dolly, to the Prince Cigalaroso. You have a mem. in the Chancellerie will do very well. The English are always in scrapes, and it is always the same: 'Mon cher Prince, — Je regrette infiniment que mes devoirs m'imposent,' &c., &c., with a full account of the 'fâcheux incident,' — that 's the phrase, mind that, Dolly; do everything necessary for the Blue Book, and in the meanwhile take care that Mrs. D. is out of prison before the day is over."

I was surprised to find how little Sir Alexander cared for the real facts of the case, or the gross injustice of the entire proceeding. In fact, he listened to my explanations on this head with as much impatience as could consist with his unquestionable good breeding, simply interpolating as I went on: "Ah, very true;" "Your observation is quite correct;" "Perfectly just," and so on. "Can you dine here to-day, Mr. Dodd?" said he, as I finished; "Penrhyn is coming, and a few other friends."

I had some half scruples about accepting a dinner invitation while my wife remained a prisoner, but I thought, "After all, the Minister must be the best judge of such a point," and accordingly said "Yes." A most agreeable dinner it was too, Tom. A party of seven at a round table, admirably served, and with — what I assure you is growing rather a rarity nowadays — a sufficiency of wine.

The Minister himself proved most agreeable; his long residence abroad had often brought him into contact with amusing specimens of his own countrymen, some of whose traits and stories he recounted admirably, showing me that the Dodds are only the species of a very widely extended and well-appreciated genus.

I own to you that I heard, with no small degree of humiliation, how prone we English are to demand money compensations for the wrongs inflicted upon us by foreign governments. As the information came from a source I cannot question, I have only to accept the fact, and deplore it.

As a nation, we are, assuredly, neither mean nor mercenary. As individuals, I sincerely hope and trust we can stand comparison in all that regards liberality of purse with any people. Yet how comes it that we have attained to an almost special notoriety for converting our sorrows into silver, and making our personal injuries into a credit at our banker's? I half suspect that the tone imparted to the national mind by our Law Courts is the true reason of this, and that our actions for damages are the damaging features of our character as a people. The man who sees no indignity in taking the price of his dishonor, will find little difficulty in appraising the value of an insult to his liberty. Take my word for it, Tom, it is a very hard thing to make foreigners respect the institutions of a country stained with this reproach, or believe that a people can be truly high-minded and high-spirited who have recourse to such indemnities.

From what fell from Sir Alexander on this subject, I could plainly perceive the embarrassment a Minister must labor under, who, while asserting the high pretensions of a great nation, is compelled to descend to such ignoble bargains; and I only wish that the good public at home, as they pore over Blue Books, would take into account this very considerable difficulty.

As regards foreign governments themselves, it is right to bear in mind that they rarely or never can be induced to believe the transgressions of individuals as anything but parts of a grand and comprehensive scheme of English interference. If John Bull smuggle a pound of tea, it is immediately set down that England is going to alter the Custom Laws. Let him surreptitiously steal his fowling-piece over the frontier, and we are accused of "arming the disaffected population." A copy of a tract is construed into a treatise on Socialism; and a "Jim-Crow" hat is the symbol of Republican doctrines.

I see the full absurdity of these suspicions, but I wish, for our own comfort's sake, to take no higher ground, that we were somewhat more circumspect in our conduct abroad. "Rule Britannia" is a very fine tune, and nobody likes to hear it, well sung, better than myself; but this I will say, Tom, "Britons *ever* will be slaves" to their prejudices and self-delusions, until they come to see that *their* notions of right and wrong are not universal, and that there is no more faulty impression than to suppose an English standard of almost anything applicable to people who have scarcely a thought, a feeling, or even a prejudice in common with us.

One might almost fancy that the travelling Englishman loved a scrape from the pleasure it afforded him of addressing his Minister, and making a fuss in the "Times." Just as a fellow who knew he had a cork jacket under his waistcoat might take pleasure in falling overboard and attracting public attention, without incurring much risk.

While we were discussing these and such-like topics, there came a note from James to say that Mrs. Dodd had just been liberated, and was then safe in what is popularly called the bosom of her family. I accordingly arose and thanked Sir Alexander most heartily for his kind and successful interference, and though I should not have objected to another glass or two of his admirable port, I felt it was only decent and becoming in me to hasten home to my wife.

As Morris had shown so much good-nature in the affair, and had — formerly, at least — been on very friendly terms with us, I asked him to come along with me; but he declined, with a kind of bashful reserve that I could not comprehend; and so, half offended at his coldness, I wished him a "good-night," and departed.

I have now only to add that I found Mrs. D. in good health and spirits, and, on the whole, rather pleased with the incident than otherwise. You shall hear from me again erelong, and meanwhile believe me,

Your ever faithful friend,

KENNY JAMES DODD.

LETTER XXVII.

MRS. DODD TO MRS. GALLAGHER, DODSBOROUGH.

CASA DODD, FLORENCE.

MY DEAR MOLLY, — So you tell me that the newspapers is full of me, and that nothing is talked of but "the case of Mrs. Dodd" and her "cruel incarnation in the dungeons of Tuscany." I wish they 'd keep their sympathies to themselves, Molly, for, to tell you a secret, this same captivity has done us the greatest service in the world. Here we are, my darling, at the top of the tree, — going to all the balls, dining out every day, and treated with what they call the most distinguished consideration. And I must say, Molly, that of all the cities ever I seen, Florence is the most to my taste. There 's a way of living here, — I can't explain how it is done, exactly; but everybody has just what he likes of everything. I believe it 's the bankers does it, — that they have a way of exchanging, or discounting, or whatever it is called, that makes every one at their ease; and, indeed, my only surprise is why everybody does n't come to live in a place with so many advantages. Even K. I. has ceased grumbling about money matters, and for the last three weeks we have really enjoyed ourselves. To be sure, now and then, he mumbles about "as well to be hanged for a sheep as a lamb;" and this morning he said that he was "too old to beg," to "dig he was ashamed." "I hope you are," says I; "it is n't in your station in life that you can go out as a navvy, and with your two daughters the greatest beauties in the town." And so they are, Molly. There is n't the like of Mary Anne in the Cascini; and though Caroline won't give herself fair play in the way of dress, there 's many thinks she 's the prettiest of the two.

I wish you saw the Cascini, Molly, when the carriages all drive up, and get mixed together, so that you would wonder how they 'd ever get out again. They are full of elegantly dressed ladies; there 's nothing too fine for them, even in the morning, and there they sit, and loll back, with all the young dandies lying about them, on the steps of the carriages, over the splash-boards, — indeed, nearly under the wheels, — squeezing their hands, looking into their eyes and under their veils. Oh dear, but it seems mighty wicked till you 're used to it, and know it 's only the way of the place, which one does remarkably soon. The first thing strikes a stranger here, Molly, is that everybody knows every other body most intimately. It 's all "Carlo," "Luigi," "Antonio mio," with hands clasped or arms about each other, and everlasting kissing between the women. And then, Molly, when you see a newly arrived English family in the midst of them, with a sulky father, a stiff mother, three stern young ladies, and a stupid boy of sixteen, you think them the ugliest creatures on earth, and don't rightly know whether to be angry or laugh at them.

Lord George says that the great advantage of the Cascini is that you hear there "all that 's going on." Faith, you do, Molly, and nice goings-on it is! The Florentines say they 've no liberty. I 'd like to know how much more they want, for if they have n't it by right, Molly, they take it at all events, and with everybody too. The creatures, all rings and chains, beards and moustaches, come up to the side of your carriage, put up their opera-glasses, and stare at you as if you was waxwork! Then they begin to discuss you, and almost fall out about the color of your hair or your eyes, till one, bolder than the rest, comes up close to you, and decides what is maybe a wager! It 's all very trying at first, — not but Mary Anne bears it beautifully, and seems never to know that she is standing under a battery of fifty pair of eyes!

As to James, it 's all paradise. He knows all the beauties of the town already, and I see him with his head into a brougham there, and his legs dangling out of a phaeton here, just as if he was one of the family. You may think, Molly, when they begin that way of a morning, what it is when they come to the evening! If they 're all dear friends in the daylight, it 's brothers and sisters — no, but husbands and wives — they become, when the lamps are lighted! Whether they walk or waltz, whether they hand you to a seat or offer you an ice, they 've an art to make it a particular attention, — and, as it were, put you under an obligation for it; and whether you like it or not, Molly, you are made out in their debt, and woe to you when they discover you 're a defaulter!

I 'm sure, without Lord George's advice, we could n't have found the right road to the high society of this place so easily; but he told K. I. at once what to do, — and for a wonder, Molly, he did it. Florence, says he, is like no other capital in Europe. In all the others there is a circle, more or less wide, of what assumes to be "the world;" there every one is known, his rank, position, and even his fortune. Now in Florence people mix as they do at a Swiss *table d'hôte;* each talks to his neighbor, perfectly aware that *he* may be a blackleg, or she — if it be a she — something worse. That society is agreeable, pleasant, and brilliant is the best refutation to all the cant one hears about freedom of manners, and so on. And, as Lord G. observes, it is manifestly a duty with the proper people to mingle with the naughty ones, since it is only in this way they can hope to reclaim them. "Take those two charming girls of yours into the world here, Mrs. D.," said he to me the other day; "show the folks that beauty, grace, and fascination are all compatible with correct principles and proper notions; let them see that you yourself, so certain of attracting admiration, are not afraid of its incense; say to society, as it were, 'Here we are, so secure of ourselves that we can walk unharmed through all the perils around us, and enjoy health and vigor with the plague on every side of us.'" And that 's what we 're doing, Molly. As Lord George says, "we 're diffusing our influence," and I 've no doubt we 'll see the results before long.

I wish I was as sure of K. I.'s goings-on; but Betty tells me that he constantly receives letters of a morning, and hurries out immediately after; that he often drives away late at night in a hackney-coach, and does n't return till nigh morning! I 'm only waiting for him to buy us a pair of carriage-horses to be at him about this behavior; and, indeed, I think he 's trying to push me on to it, to save him from the expense of the horses. I must tell you, Molly, that next to having no character, the most fashionable thing here is a handsome coach; and, indeed, without something striking in that way, you can't hope to take society by storm. With a phaeton and a pair of blood bays, James says, you can drive into Prince Walleykoffsky's drawing-room; with a team of four, you can trot them up the stairs of the Pitti Palace.

After a coach, comes your cook; and is n't my heart broke trying them! We 've had a round of "experimental dinners," that has cost us a little fortune, since each "*chef*" that came was free to do what he pleased, without regard to the cost, and an eatable morsel never came to the table all the while. Our present artist is Monsieur Chardron, who goes out to market in a brougham, and buys a turkey with kid gloves on him. He won't cook for us except on company days, but leaves us to his "*aide*," as he calls him, whom K. I. likes best, for he condescends to give us a bit of roast meat, now and then, that has really nourishment in it. We 're now, therefore, in a state to open the campaign. We 've an elegant apartment, a first-rate cook, a capital courier; and next week we 're to set up a chasseur, if K. I. will only consent to be made a Count.

You may stare, Molly, when I tell you that he fights against it as if it was the Court of Bankruptcy; though Lord George worked night and day to have it done. There never was the like of it for cheapness; a trifle over twenty pounds clears the whole expense; and for that he would be Count Dodd, of Fiezole, with a title to each of the children. As many thousands would n't do that in England; and, indeed, one does n't wonder at the general outcry of the expense of living there, when the commonest luxuries are so costly. Mary Anne and I are determined on it, and before the month is over your letters will be addressed to a Countess.

In the middle of all this happiness, my dear, there is a drop of bitter, as there always is in the cup of life, though you may do your best not to taste it. Indeed, if it was n't for this drawback, Florence would be a place I 'd like to live and die in. What I allude to is this: here we are between two fires, Molly, — the Morrises on one side, and Mrs. Gore Hampton on the other, — both watching, scrutinizing, and observing us; for, as bad luck would have it, they both settled down here for the winter! Now, the Morrises know all the quiet, well-behaved, respectable people, that one ought to be acquainted with just for decency's sake. But Mrs. G. H. is in the fashionable and fast set, where all the fun is going on; and from what I can learn them 's the very people would suit us best. Being in neither camp, we hear nothing but the abuse and scandal that each throws on the other; and, indeed, to do them justice, if half of it was true, there 's few of them ought to escape hanging!

That 's how we stand; and can you picture to yourself a more embarrassing situation? for you see that many of the slow people are high in station and of real rank, while some of the fast are just the reverse. Lord George says, "Cut the fogies, and come amongst the fast 'uns," and talks about making friends with the "Mammoth of unrighteousness;" and if he means Mrs. G. H., I believe he is n't far wrong: but even if we consented, Molly, I don't know whether she 'd make up with us; though Lord George swears that he 'll answer for it with his head. One thing is clear, Molly, we must choose between them, and that soon too; for it 's quite impossible to be "well with the Treasury and the Opposition also."

K. I. affects neutrality, just to blind us to his real intentions; but I know him well, and see plainly what he 's after. Cary fights hard for her friends; though, to say the truth, they have n't taken the least notice of her since they came to their fortune, — the very thing I expected from them, Molly, for it 's just the way with all upstarts! Now you see some of the difficulties that attend even the highest successes in life; and maybe it will make you more contented with your own obscurity. Perhaps, before this reaches you, we 'll have decided for one or the other; for, as Lord G. says, you can't pass your life between silly and crabbed.[1]

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[1] Does Mrs. D. mean Scylla and Charybdis? — *Editor of "Dodd Correspondence."*

There 's another thing fretting me, besides, Molly. It is what this same Lord George means about Mary Anne; for it 's now more than six months since he grew particular; and yet there 's nothing come of it yet. I see it 's preying on the girl herself, too, — and what 's to be done? I am sure I often think of what poor old Jones M'Carthy used to say about this: "If I 'd a family of daughters," says he, "I 'd do just as I manage with the horses when I want to sell one of them. There they are, — look at them as long as you like in the stable, but I 'll have no taking them out for a trial, and trotting them here, and cantering them there; and then, a fellow coming to tell me that they have this, that, and the other." And the more I think of it, Molly, the more I 'm convinced it 's the right way; though it 's too late, maybe, to help it now.

As I mean to send you another letter soon, I 'll close this now, wishing you all the compliments of the season, except chilblains, and remain your true and affectionate friend,

JEMIMA DODD.

P. S. You 'd better direct your next letter to us "Casa Dodd," for I remark that all the English here try and get rid of the Italian names to the houses as soon as they can.

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LETTER XXVIII.

JAMES DODD TO ROBERT DOOLAN, ESQ., TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

FLORENCE.

MY DEAR BOB, — If you only knew how difficult it is to obtain even five minutes of quiet leisure in this same capital, you 'd at once absolve me from all the accusations in your last letter. It is pleasure at a railroad pace, from morning till night, and from night till morning. Perhaps, after all, it is best there should be no time for reflection, since it would be like one waiting on the rails for an express train to run over him!

I can give you no better nor speedier illustration of the kind of life we lead here, than by saying that even the governor has felt the fascination of the place, and goes the pace, signing checks and drawing bills without the slightest hesitation, or any apparent sense of a coming responsibility. He plays, too, and loses his money freely, and altogether comports himself as if he had a most liberal income, or — terrible alternative — not a sixpence in the world. I own to you, Bob, that this recklessness affrights me far more than all his former grumbling over our expensive and wasteful habits. He seems to have adopted it, too, with a certain method that gives it all the appearance of a plan, though I confess what possible advantage could redound from it is utterly beyond my power of calculation.

Meanwhile our style of living is on a scale of splendor that might well suit the most ample fortune. Tiverton says that for a month or two this is absolutely necessary, and that in society, as in war, it is the first dash often decides a campaign. And really, even my own brief experience of the world shows that one's friends, as they are conventionally called, are far more interested in the skill of your cook than in the merits of your own character; and that he who has a good cellar may indulge himself in the luxury of a very bad conscience. You, of course, suspect that I am now speaking of a class of people dubious both in fortune and position, and who have really no right to scrutinize too closely the characters of those with whom they associate. Quite the reverse, Bob, I am actually alluding to our very best and most correct English, and who would not for worlds do at home any one of the hundred transgressions they commit abroad. For instance, we have, in this goodly capital of debt and divorce celebrity, a certain house of almost princely splendor; the furniture, plate, pictures, all perfection; the cook, an artist that once pampered royal palates; in a word, everything, from the cellar to the conservatory, a miracle of correct taste. The owner of all this magnificence is — what think you? — a successful swindler! — the hero of a hundred bubble speculations, — the spoliator of some thousands of shareholders, — a fellow whose infractions have been more than once stigmatized by public prosecution, and whose rascalities are of European fame! You 'd say that with all these detracting influences he was a man of consummate social tact, refined manners, and at least possessing the outward signs of good breeding. Wrong again, Bob. He is coarse, uneducated, and vulgar; he never picked up any semblance of the class from whom he peculated; and has lived on, as he began, a "low comedy villain," and no more. Well, what think you, when I tell you that is "*the* house," *par excellence*, where all strangers strive to be introduced, — that to be on the dinner-list here is a distinction, and that even a visitor enjoys an envied fortune, — and that at the very moment I write, the Dodd family are in earnest and active negotiation to attain to this inestimable privilege? Now, Bob, there 's no denying that there must be something rotten, and to the core too, where such a condition of things prevails. If this man fed the hungry and sheltered the houseless, who had no alternative but his table or no food, the thing requires no explanation; or if his hospitalities were partaken of by that large floating class who in every city are to be found, with tastes disproportionate to their fortunes, and who will at any time postpone their principles to their palates, even then the matter is not of difficult solution; but what think you that his company includes some of the very highest names of our stately nobility, and that the titles that resound through his *salon* are amongst the most honored of our haughty aristocracy! These people assuredly stand in no want of a dinner. They are comfortably lodged, and at least reasonably well fed at the "Italie" or the "Grande Bretagne." Why should they stoop to such companionship? Who can explain this, Bob? Assuredly, I am not the Œdipus!

I am nothing surprised that people like ourselves, for instance, seek to enjoy even this passing splendor, and find themselves at a princely board, served with a more than royal costliness. One of these grand dinners is like a page of the Arabian Nights to a man of ordinary condition; but surely his Grace the Duke, or the most Noble the Marquis has no such illusions. With *him* it is only a question whether the Madeira over-flavored the soup, or that the ortolans might possibly have been fatter. *He* dines pretty much in the same fashion every day during the London season, and a great part of the rest of the year afterwards. Why then should he descend to any compromise to accept Count "Dragonards's" hospitality? for I must tell you that "Dives" is a Count, and has orders from the Pope and the Queen of Spain.

With the explanation, as I have said, I have nothing to do. It is beyond and above me. For the fact alone I am guarantee; and here comes Tiverton in a transport of triumph to say that "Heaven is won," or, in humbler phrase, "Monsieur le Comte de Dragonards prie l'honneur," &c., and that Dodd *père* and Dodd *mère* are requested to dine with him on Tuesday, the younger Dodds to assist at a reception in the evening.

Tiverton assures me that by accepting with a good grace the humbler part of a "refresher," I am certain of promotion afterwards to a higher range of character; and in this hope I live for the present.

It is likely I shall not despatch this without being able to tell you more of this great man's house; meanwhile —

"majora cantamus" — I am in love, Bob! If I did n't dash into the confession at once, as one springs into the sea of a chilly morning, I'd even put on the clothes of secrecy, and walk off unconfessed. She is lovely, beyond anything I can give you an idea of, — pale as marble; but such a flesh tint! a sunset sleeping upon snow, and with lids fringed over a third of her cheek. You know the tender, languid, longing look that vanquishes me, — that 's exactly what she has! A glance of timid surprise, like an affrighted fawn, and then a downcast consciousness, — a kind of self-reproaching sense of her own loveliness,— a sort of a — what the devil kind of enchantment and witchery, Bob? that makes a man feel it 's all no use struggling and fighting, — that his doom is *there!* that the influence which is to rule his destiny is before him, and that, turn him which way he will, his heart has but one road — and *will* take it!

She was in Box 19, over the orchestra! I caught a glimpse of her shoulder — only her shoulder — at first, as she sat with her face to the stage, and a huge screen shaded her from the garish light of the lustre. How I watched the graceful bend of her neck each time she saluted — I suppose it was a salutation — some new visitor who entered! The drooping leaves and flowers of her hair trembled with a gentle motion, as if to the music of her soft voice. I thought I could hear the very accents echoing within my heart! But oh! my ecstasy when her hand stole forth and hung listlessly over the cushion of the box! True it was gloved, yet still you could mark its symmetry, and, in fancy, picture the rosy-tipped fingers in all their graceful beauty.

Night after night I saw her thus; yet never more than I have told you. I made superhuman efforts to obtain the box directly in front; but it belonged to a Russian princess, and was therefore inaccessible. I bribed the bassoon and seduced the oboe in the orchestra; but nothing was to be seen from their inferno of discordant tunings. I made love to a ballet-dancer, to secure the *entrée* behind the scenes; and on the night of my success *she* — my adored one — had changed her place with a friend, and sat with her back to the stage. The adverse fates had taken a spite against me, Bob, and I saw that my passion must prove unhappy!

Somehow it is in love as in hunting, you are never really in earnest so long as the country is open and the fences easy; but once that the ditches are "yawners," and the walls "raspers," you sit down to your work with a resolute heart and a steady eye, determined, at any cost and at any peril, to be in at the death. Would that the penalties were alike also! How gladly would I barter a fracturéd rib or a smashed collar-bone for the wrecked and cast-away spirit of my lost and broken heart!

If I suffer myself to expand upon my feelings, there will be no end of this, Bob. I already have a kind of consciousness that I could fill three hundred and fifty folio volumes, like "Hansard's," in subtle description and discrimination of sensations that were not exactly "*this*," but were very like "*that;*" and of impressions, hopes, fancies, fears, and visions, a thousand times more real than all the actual events of my *bonâ fide* existence. And, after all, what balderdash it is to compare the little meaningless incidents of our lives with the soul-stirring passions that rage within us! the thoughts that, so to say, form the very fuel of our natures! These are, indeed, the realities; and what we are in the habit of calling such are the mere mockeries and semblances of fact! I can honestly aver that I suffered — in the true sense of the word — more intense agony from the conflict of my distracted feelings than I ever did when lying under the pangs of a compound fracture; and I may add of a species of pain not to be alleviated by anodynes and soothed by hot flannels.

To be brief, Bob, I felt that, though I had often caught slight attacks of the malady, at length I had contracted it in its deadliest form, — a regular "blue case," as they say, with bad symptoms from the start. Has it ever struck you that a man may go through every stage of a love fever without even so much as speaking to the object of his affections? I can assure you that the thing is true, and I myself suffered nightly every vacillating sense of hope, fear, ecstasy, despair, joy, jealousy, and frantic delight, just by following out the suggestions of my own fancy, and exalting into importance the veriest trifles of the hour.

With what gloomy despondence did I turn homeward of an evening, when she sat back in the box, and perhaps nothing of her but her bouquet was visible for a whole night! — with what transports have I carried away the memory of her profile, seen but for a second! Then the agonies of my jealousy, as I saw her listening, with pleased attention, to some essenced puppy — I could swear it was such — who lounged into her box before the ballet! But at last came the climax of my joy, when I saw her "lorgnette" directed towards me, as I stood in the pit, and actually felt her eyes on me! I can imagine some old astronomer's ecstasy, as, gazing for hours on the sky of night, the star that he has watched and waited for has suddenly shone through the glass of his telescope, and lit up his very heart within him with its radiance. I'd back myself to have experienced a still more thrilling sense of happiness as the beams of her bright eyes descended on me.

At first, Bob, I thought that the glances might have been meant for another. I turned and looked around me, ready to fasten a deadly quarrel upon him, whom I should have regarded at once as my greatest enemy. But the company amidst which I stood soon reassured me. A few snuffy-looking old counts, with brown wigs and unshaven chins, — a stray Government clerk with a pinchbeck chain and a weak moustache, could n't be my rivals. I looked again, but she had turned away her head; and save that the "lorgnette" still rested within her fingers, I'd have thought the whole a vision.

Three nights after this the same thing occurred. I had taken care to resume the very same place each evening, to wear the same dress, to stand in the very same attitude, — a very touching "pose," which I had practised before the glass. I had not been more than two hours at my post, when she turned abruptly round and stared full at me. There could be no mistake, no misconception whatever; for, as if to confirm my wavering doubts, her friend took the glass from her, and looked full and long at me. You may imagine, Bob, somewhat of the preoccupation of my faculties when I tell you that I never so much as recognized her friend. I had thoughts, eyes, ears, and senses for one, — and one only. Judge, then, my astonishment when she saluted me, giving that little gesture with the hand your Florentines are such adepts in, — a species of salutation so full of most expressive meaning.

Short of a crow-quilled billet, neatly endorsed with her name, nothing could have spoken more plainly. It said, in a few words, "Come up here, Jim, we shall be delighted to see you." I accepted the augury, Bob, as we used to say in Virgil, and in less than a minute had forced my passage through the dense crowd of the pit, and was mounting the box stairs, five steps at a spring. "Whose box is No. 19?" said I to an official. "Madame de Goranton," was the reply. Awkward this; never had heard the name before; sounded like French; might be Swiss; possibly Belgian.

No time for debating the point, tapped and entered, — several persons within barring up the passage to the front, — suddenly heard a well-known voice, which accosted me most cordially, and, to my intense surprise, saw before me Mrs. Gore Hampton! You know already all about her, Bob, and I need not recapitulate.

"I fancied you were going to pass your life in distant adoration yonder, Mr. Dodd," said she, laughingly, while she tendered her hand for me to kiss. "Adeline, dearest, let me present to you my friend Mr. Dodd." A very cold — an icy recognition was the reply to this speech; and Adeline opened her fan, and said something behind it to an elderly dandy beside her, who laughed, and said, "*Parfaitement, ma foi!*"

Registering a secret vow to be the death of the antiquated tiger aforesaid, I entered into conversation with Mrs. G. H., who, notwithstanding some unpleasant passages between our families, expressed unqualified delight at the thought of meeting us all once more; inquired after my mother most affectionately; and asked if the girls were looking well, and whether they rode and danced as beautifully as ever. She made, between times, little efforts to draw her friend into conversation by some allusion to Mary Anne's grace or Cary's accomplishments; but all in vain. Adeline only met the advances with a cold stare, or a little half-smile of most sneering expression. It was not that she was distant and reserved towards me. No, Bob; her manner was downright contemptuous; it was insulting; and yet such was the fascination her beauty had acquired over me that I could have knelt at her feet in adoration of her. I have no doubt that she saw this. I soon perceived that Mrs. Gore Hampton did. There is a wicked consciousness in a woman's look as she sees a man "hooked," there's no mistaking. Her eyes expressed this sentiment now; and, indeed, she did not try to hide it.

She invited me to come home and sup with them. She half tried to make Adeline say a word or two in support of the invitation; but no, she would not even hear it; and when I accepted, she half peevishly declared she had got a bad headache, and would go to bed after the play. I tell you these trivial circumstances, Bob, just that you may fancy how irretrievably lost I was when such palpable signs of dislike could not discourage me. I felt this all — and acutely too; but somehow with no sense of defeat, but a stubborn, resolute determination to conquer them.

I went back to sup with Mrs. G. H., and Adeline kept her word and retired. There were a few men — foreigners of distinction — but I sat beside the hostess, and heard nothing but praises of that "dear angel." These eulogies were mixed up with a certain tender pity that puzzled me sadly, since they always left the impression that either the angel had done something herself, or some one else had done it towards her, that called for all the most compassionate sentiments of the human heart. As to any chance of her history — who she was, whence she came, and so on — it was quite out of the question; you might as well hope for the private life of some aerial spirit that descends in the midst of canvas clouds in a ballet. She was there — to be worshipped, wondered at, and admired, but not to be catechised.

I left Mrs. H.'s house at three in the morning, — a sadder but scarcely a wiser man. She charged me most solemnly not to mention to any one where I had been, — a precaution possibly suggested by the fact that I had lost sixty Napoleons at lansquenet, — a game at which I left herself and her friends deeply occupied when I came away. I was burning with impatience for Tiverton to come back to Florence. He had gone down to the Maremma to shoot snipe. For, although I was precluded by my promise from divulging about the supper, I bethought me of a clever stratagem by which I could obtain all the counsel and guidance without any breach of faith, and this was, to take him with me some evening to the pit, station him opposite to No. 19, and ask all about its occupants; he knows everybody everywhere, so that I should have the whole history of my unknown charmer on the easiest of all terms.

From that day and that hour, I became a changed creature. The gay follies of my fashionable friends gave me no pleasure. I detested balls. I abhorred theatres. *She* ceased to frequent the opera. In fact, I gave the most unequivocal proof of my devotion to one by a most sweeping detestation of all the rest of mankind. Amidst my other disasters, I could not remember where Mrs. Gore Hampton lived. We had driven to her house after the theatre; it was a long way off, and seemed to take a very circuitous course to reach, but in what direction I had not the very vaguest notion of. The name of it, too, had escaped me, though she repeated it over several times when I was taking my leave of her. Of course, my omitting to call and pay my respects would subject me to every possible construction of rudeness and incivility, and here was, therefore, another source of irritation and annoyance to me.

My misanthropy grew fiercer. I had passed through the sad stage, and now entered upon the combative period of the disease. I felt an intense longing to have a quarrel with somebody. I frequented *cafés*, and walked the streets in a battle, murder, and sudden-death humor, — frowning at this man, scowling at that. But, have you never remarked, the caprice of Fortune is in this as in all other things? Be indifferent at play, and you are sure to win; show yourself regardless of a woman, and you are certain to hear she wants to make your acquaintance. Go out of a morning in a mood of universal love and philanthropy, and I'll take the odds that you have a duel on your hands before evening.

There was one man in Florence whom I especially desired to fix a quarrel upon, — this was Morris, or, as he was now called, Sir Morris Penrhyn. A fellow who unquestionably ought to have had very different claims on my regard, but who now, in this perversion of my feelings, struck me as exactly the man to shoot or be shot by. Don't you know that sensation, Bob, in which a man feels that he must select a particular person, quite apart from any misfortune he is suffering under, and make *him* pay its penalty? It is a species of antipathy that defies all reason, and, indeed, your attempt to argue yourself out of it only serves to strengthen and confirm its hold on you.

Morris and I had ceased to speak when we met; we merely saluted coldly, and with that rigid observance of a courtesy that makes the very easiest prelude to a row, each party standing ready prepared to say "check" whenever the other should chance to make a wrong move. Perhaps I am not justified in saying so much of *him*, but I know that I do not exaggerate my own intentions. I fancied — what will a man not fancy in one of these eccentric stages of his existence? — that Morris saw my purpose, and evaded me. I argued myself into the notion that he was deficient in personal courage, and constructed upon this idea a whole edifice of absurdity.

I am ashamed, even before you, to acknowledge the extent to which my stupid infatuation blinded me; perhaps the best penalty to pay for it is an open confession.

I overtook our valet one morning with a letter in my governor's hand addressed to Sir Morris Penrhyn, and on inquiring, discovered that he and my father had been in close correspondence for the three days previous. At once I jumped to the conclusion that I was, somehow or other, the subject of these epistles, and in a fit of angry indignation I drove off to Morris's hotel.

When a man gets himself into a thorough passion on account of some supposed injury, which even to himself he is unable to define, his state is far from enviable. When I reached the hotel, I was in the hot stage of my anger, and could scarcely brook the delay of sending in my card. The answer was, "Sir Morris did not receive." I asked for pen and ink to write a note, and scribbled something most indiscreet and offensive. I am glad to say that I cannot now remember a line of it. The reply came that my "note should be attended to," and with this information I issued forth into the street half wild with rage.

I felt that I had given a deadly provocation, and must now look out for some "friend" to see me through the affair. Tiverton was absent, and amongst all my acquaintances I could not pitch upon one to whose keeping I liked to entrust my honor. I turned into several *cafés*, I strolled into the club, I drove down to the Cascini, but in vain; and at last was walking homeward, when I caught sight of a friendly face from the window of a travelling-carriage that drove rapidly by, and, hurrying after, just came up as it stopped at the door of the Hôtel d'Italie.

You may guess my astonishment as I felt my hand grasped cordially by no other than our old neighbor at Bruff, Dr. Belton, the physician of our county dispensary. Five minutes explained his presence there. He had gone out to Constantinople as the doctor to our Embassy, and by some piece of good luck and his own deservings to boot, had risen to the post of Private Secretary to the Ambassador, and was selected by him to carry home some very important despatches, to the rightful consideration of which his own presence at the Foreign Office was deemed essential.

Great as was the difference between his former and his present station, it was insignificant in comparison with the change worked in himself. The country doctor, of diffident manners and retiring habits, grateful for the small civilities of small patrons, cautiously veiling his conscious superiority under an affected ignorance, was now become a consummate man of the world, — calm, easy, and self-possessed. His very appearance had undergone an alteration, and he held himself more erect, and looked not only handsomer but taller. These were the first things that struck me; but as we conversed together, I found him the same hearty, generous fellow I had ever known him, neither elated by his good fortune, nor, what is just as common a fault, contemptuously pretending that it was only one-half of his deserts.

One thing alone puzzled me, it was that he evinced no desire to come and see our family, who had been uniformly kind and good-natured to him; in fact, when I proposed it, he seemed so awkward and embarrassed that I never pressed my invitation, but changed the topic. I knew that there had been, once on a time, some passages between my sister Mary Anne and him, and therefore supposed that possibly there might have been something or other that rendered a meeting embarrassing. At all events, I accepted his half-apology on the ground of great fatigue, and agreed to dine with him.

What a pleasant dinner it was! He related to me all the story of his life, not an eventful one as regarded incident, but full of those traits which make up interest for an individual. You felt as you listened that it was a thoroughly good fellow was talking to you, and that if he were not to prove successful in life, it was just because his were the very qualities rogues trade on for their own benefit. There was, moreover, a manly sense of independence about him, a consciousness of self-reliance that never approached conceit, but served to nerve his courage and support his spirit, which gave him an almost heroism in my eyes, and I own, too, suggested a most humiliating comparison with my own nature.

I opened my heart freely to him about everything, and in particular about Morris; and although I saw plainly enough that he took very opposite views to mine about the whole matter, he agreed to stop in Florence for a day, and act as my friend in the transaction. This being so far arranged, I started for Carrara, which, being beyond the Tuscan frontier, admits of our meeting without any risk of interruption, — for that it must come to such I am fully determined on. The fact is, Bob, my note is a "stunner," and, as I won't retract, Morris has no alternative but to come out.

I have now given you — at full length too — the whole history, up to the catastrophe, — which perhaps may have to be supplied by another hand. I am here, in this little capital of artists and quarrymen, patiently waiting for Belton's arrival, or at least some despatch, which may direct my future movements. It has been a comfort to me to have the task of this recital, since, for the time at least, it takes me out of brooding and gloomy thoughts; and though I feel that I have made out a poor case for myself, I know that I am pleading to a friendly Court and a merciful Chief Justice.

They say that in the few seconds of a drowning agony a man calls up every incident of his life, — from infancy to the last moment, — that a whole panorama of his existence is unrolled before him, and that he sees himself — child, boy, youth, and man — vividly and palpably; that all his faults, his short-comings, and his transgressions stand out in strong colors before him, and his character is revealed to him like an inscription. I am half persuaded this may be true, judging from what I have myself experienced within these few hours of solitude here. Shame, sorrow, and regret are ever present with me. I feel utterly disgraced before the bar of my own conscience. Even of the advantages which foreign travel might have conferred, how few have fallen to my share! — in modern languages I have scarcely made any progress, with respect to works of art I am deplorably ignorant, while in everything that concerns the laws and the modes of government of any foreign State I have to confess myself totally uninformed. To be sure, I have acquired some insight into the rogueries of "Rouge-et-Noir," I can slang a courier, and even curse a waiter; but I have some misgivings whether these be gifts either to promote a man's fortune or form his character. In fact, I begin to feel that engrafting Continental slang upon home "snobbery" is a very unrewarding process, and I sorely fear that I have done very little more than this.

I am in a mood to make a clean breast of it, and perhaps say more than I should altogether like to remember hereafter, so will conclude for the present, and with my most sincere affection write myself, as ever, yours,

JIM DODD.

P. S. It is not impossible that you may have a few lines from me by to-morrow or next day, — at least, if I have anything worth the telling and am "to the fore" to tell it.

LETTER XXIX.

MARY ANNE DODD TO MISS DOOLAN, OF BALLYDOOLAN.

CASA DODD, FLORENCE.

DEAREST KITTY, — Seventeen long and closely written pages to you — the warm out-gushings of my heart — have I just consigned to the flames. They contained the journal of my life in Florence, — all my thoughts and hopes, my terrors, my anxieties, and my day-dreams. Why, then, will you say, have they met this fate? I will tell you, Kitty. Of the feelings there recorded, of the emotions depicted, of the very events themselves, nothing — absolutely nothing — now remains; and my poor, distracted, forlorn heart no more resembles the buoyant spirit of yesterday than the blackened embers before me are like the carefully inscribed pages I had once destined for your hand. Pity me, dearest Kitty, — pour out every compassionate thought of your kindred heart, and let me feel that, as the wind sweeps over the snowy Apennines, it bears the tender sighs of your affection to one who lives but to be loved! But a week ago, and what a world was opening before me, — a world brilliant in all that makes life a triumph! We were launched upon the sunny sea of high society, our "argosy" a noble and stately ship; and now, Kitty, we lie stranded, shattered, and shipwrecked.

Do not expect from me any detailed account of our disasters. I am unequal to the task. It is not at the moment of being cast away that the mariner can recount the story of his wreck. Enough if these few lines be like the chance words which, enclosed in a bottle, are committed to the waves, to tell at some distant date and in some far-away land the tale of impending ruin.

It is in vain I try to collect my thoughts: feelings too acute to be controlled burst in upon me at each moment, and my sobs convulse me as I write. These lines must therefore bear the impress of the emotions that dictate them, and be broken, abrupt, mayhap incoherent!

He is false, Kitty! — false to the heart that he had won, and the affections where he sat enthroned! Yes, by the blackest treason has he requited my loyalty and rewarded my devotion. If ever there was a pure and holy love, it was mine. It was not the offspring of self-interest, for I knew that he was married; nor was I buoyed up by dreams of ambition, for I always knew the great difficulty of obtaining a divorce. But I loved him, as the classic maiden wept, — because it was inconsolable! It is not in my heart to deny the qualities of his gifted nature. No, Kitty, not even now can I depreciate them. How accomplished as a linguist! — how beautifully he drove! — how exquisitely he danced! — what perfection was his dress! — how fascinating his manners! There was — so to say — an idiosyncrasy — an idealism about him; his watchguard was unlike any other, — the very perfume of his pocket-handkerchief was the invention of his own genius.

And then, the soft flattery of his attentions before the world, bestowed with a delicacy that only high breeding ever understands. What wonder if my imagination followed where my heart had gone before, and if the visions of a future blended with the ecstasies of the present!

I cannot bring myself to speak of his treachery. No, Kitty, it would be to arraign myself were I to do so. My heartstrings are breaking, as I ask myself, "Is this, then, the love that I inspired? Are these the proofs of a devotion I fondly fancied eternal?" No more can I speak of our last meeting, the agony of which must endure while life remains. When he left me, I almost dreaded that in his despair he might be driven to suicide. He fled from the house, — it was past midnight, — and never appeared the whole of the following day; another and another passed over, — my terrors increased, my fears rose to madness. I could restrain myself no longer, and hurried away to confide my agonizing sorrows to James's ear. It was early, and he was still sleeping. As I stole across the silent room, I saw an open note upon the table, — I knew the hand and seized it at once. There were but four lines, and they ran thus:—

"DEAR JIM,—The birds are wild and not very plenty; but there is some capital boar-shooting, and hares in abundance.

"They tell me Lady George is in Florence; pray see her, and let me know how she's looking.

"Ever yours,
"GEORGE TIVERTON.

"MAREMMA."

I tottered to a seat, Kitty, and burst into tears. Yours are now falling for me,—I feel it,—I know it, dearest. I can write no more.

I am better now, dearest Kitty. My heart is stilled, its agonies are calmed, but my blanched cheek, my sunken eye, my bloodless lip, my trembling hand, all speak my sorrows, though my tongue shall utter them no more. Never again shall that name escape me, and I charge your friendship never to whisper it to my ears.

From myself and my own fortunes I turn away as from a theme barren and profitless. Of Mary Anne—the lost, the forlorn, and the broken-hearted, you shall hear no more.

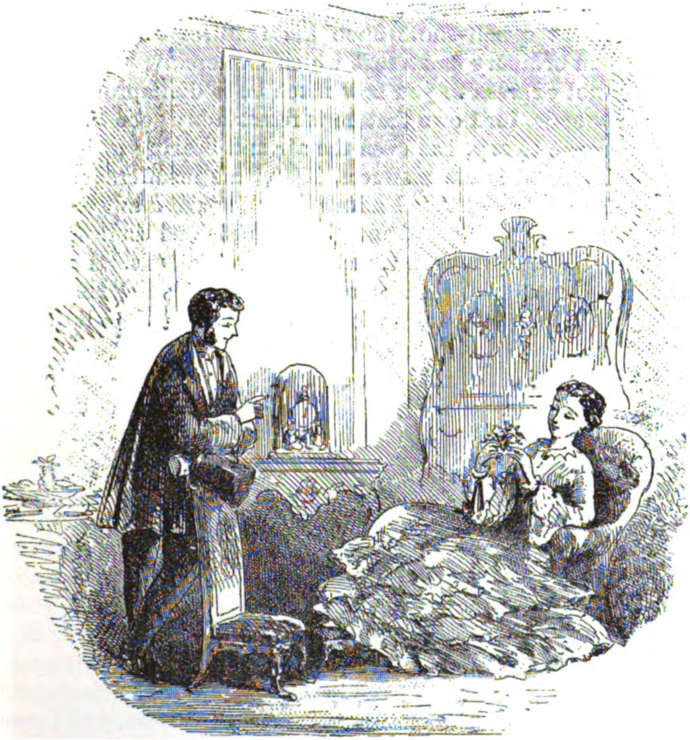
On Friday last—was it Friday?—I really forget days and dates and everything—James, who has latterly become totally changed in temper and appearance, contrived to fix a quarrel of some kind or other on Sir Morris Penrhyn. The circumstance was so far the more unfortunate, since Sir M. had shown himself most kind and energetic about mamma's release, and mainly, I believe, contributed to that result. In the dark obscurity that involves the whole affair, we have failed to discover with whom the offence originated, or what it really was. We only know that James wrote a most indiscreet and intemperate note to Sir Morris, and then hastened away to appoint a friend to receive his message. By the merest accident he detected, in a passing travelling-carriage, a well-known face, followed it, and discovered—whom, think you?—but our former friend and neighbor, Dr. Belton.

He was on his way to England with despatches from Constantinople; but, fortunately for James, received a telegraphic message to wait at Florence for more recent news from Vienna before proceeding farther. James at once induced him to act for him; and firmly persuaded that a meeting must ensue, set out himself for the Modense frontier beyond Lucca.

I have already said that we know nothing of the grounds of quarrel; we probably never shall; but whatever they were, the tact and delicacy of Dr. B., aided by the unvarying good sense and good temper of Sir Morris, succeeded in overcoming them; and this morning both these gentlemen drove here in a carriage, and had a long interview with papa. The room in which he received them adjoined my own, and though for a long time the conversation was maintained in the dull, monotonous tone of ordinary speakers, at last I heard hearty laughter, in which papa's voice was eminently conspicuous.

With a heart relieved of a heavy load, I dressed, and went into the drawing-room. I wore a very becoming dark blue silk, with three deep flounces, and as many falls of Valenciennes lace on my sleeves. My hair was "à l'Impératrice," and altogether, Kitty, I felt I was looking my very best; not the less, perhaps, that a certain degree of expectation had given me a faint color, and imparted a heightened animation to my features. I was alone, too, and seated in a large, low arm-chair, one of those charming inventions of modern skill, whose excellence is to unite grace with comfort, and make ease itself subsidiary to elegance.

I could see in the glass at one side of me that my attitude was well chosen, and even to my instep upon the little stool the effect was good. Shall I own to you, Kitty, that I was bent on astonishing this poor native doctor with a change a year of foreign travel had wrought in me? I actually longed to enjoy the amazed look with which he would survey me, and mark the deferential humility struggling with the remembrance of former intimacy. A hundred strange fancies shot through me,— shall I fascinate him by mere externals, or shall I condescend to captivate? Shall I delight him by memories of home and of long ago, or shall I shock him by the little levities of foreign manner? Shall I be brilliant, witty, and amusing, or shall I show myself gentle and subdued, or shall I dash my manner with a faint tinge of eccentricity, just enough to awaken interest by exciting anxiety?



I was almost ashamed to think of such an amount of preparation against so weak an adversary. It seemed ungenerous and even unfair, when suddenly I heard a carriage drive away from the door. I could have cried with vexation, but at the same instant heard papa's voice on the stairs, saying, "If you'll step into the drawing-room, I'll join you presently;" and Dr. Belton entered.

I expected, if not humility, dearest, at least deference, mingled with intense astonishment and, perhaps, admiration. Will you believe me when I tell you that he was just as composed, as easy and unconstrained as if it was my sister Cary! The very utmost I could do was to restrain my angry sense of indignation; I 'm not, indeed, quite certain that I succeeded in this, for I thought I detected at one moment a half-smile upon his features at a sally of more than ordinary smartness which I uttered.

I cannot express to you how much he is disimproved, not in appearance, for I own that he is remarkably good-looking, and, strange to say, has even the air and bearing of fashion about him. It is his manners, Kitty, his insufferable ease and self-sufficiency, that I allude to. He talked away about the world and society, about great people and their habits, as if they were amongst his earliest associations. He was not astonished at anything; and, stranger than all, showed not the slightest desire to base his present acquaintance upon our former intimacy.

I told him I detested Ireland, and hoped never to go back there. He coldly remarked that with such feelings it were probably wiser to live abroad. I sneered at the vulgar tone of the untravelled English; and his impertinent remark was an allusion to the demerits of badly imitated manners and ill-copied attractions. I grew enthusiastic about art, praised pictures and statues, and got eloquent about music. Fancy his cool insolence, in telling me that he was too uninformed to enter upon these themes, and only knew when he was pleased, but without being able to say why. In fact, Kitty, a more insufferable mass of conceit and presumption I never encountered, nor could I have believed that a few months of foreign travel could have converted a simple-hearted, unaffected young man into a vain, self-opinionated coxcomb, — too offensive to waste words on, and for whom I have really to apologize in thus obtruding on your notice.

It was an unspeakable relief to me when papa joined us. A very little more would have exhausted my patience; and in my heart I believe the puppy saw as much, and enjoyed it as a triumph. Worse again, too, papa complimented him upon the change a knowledge of the world had effected in him, and even asked me to concur in the commendation. I need not say that I replied to this address by a sneer not to be misunderstood, and I trust he felt it.

He is to dine here to-day. He declined the invitation at first, but suffered himself to be persuaded into a cold acceptance afterwards. He had to go to Lord Stanthorpe's in the evening. I expected to hear him say "Stanthorpe's;" but he did n't, and it vexed me. I have not been peculiarly courteous nor amiable to him this morning, but I hope he will find me even less so at dinner. I only wish that a certain person was here, and I would show, by the preference of my manner, how I can converse with, and how treat those whom I really recognize as my equals. I must now hurry away to prepare Cary for what she is to expect, and, if possible, instil into her mind some share of the prejudices which now torture my own.

Saturday Morning

Everything considered, Kitty, our dinner of yesterday passed off pleasantly, — a thousand times better than I expected. Sir Morris Penrhyn was of the party too; and notwithstanding certain awkward passages that had once occurred between mamma and him, comported himself agreeably and well. I concluded that papa was able to make some explanations that must have satisfied him, for he appeared to renew his attentions to Cary; at least, he bestowed upon her some arctic civilities, whose frigid deference chills me even in memory.

You will be curious to hear how Mr. B. (he appears to have dropped the Doctor) appeared on further intimacy; and, really, I am forced to confess that he rather overcame some of the unfavorable impressions his morning visit had left. He has evidently taken pains to profit by the opportunities afforded to him, and seen and learned whatever lay within his reach. He is a very respectable linguist, and not by any means so presumptuous as I at first supposed. I fancy, dearest, that somehow, unconsciously perhaps, we have been sparring with each other this morning, and that thus many of the opinions he appeared to profess were simply elicited by the spirit of contradiction. I say this, because I now find that we agree on a vast variety of topics, and even our judgments of people are not so much at variance as I could have imagined.

Of course, Kitty, the sphere of his knowledge of the world is a very limited one, and even what he *has* seen has always been in the capacity of a subordinate. He has not viewed life from the eminence of one who shall be nameless, nor mixed in society with a rank that confers its prescriptive title to attention. I could wish he were more aware — more conscious of this fact. I mean, dearest, that I should like to see him more penetrated by his humble position, whereas his manner has an easy, calm unconstraint, that is exactly the opposite of what I imply. I cannot exactly, perhaps, convey the impression upon my own mind, but you may approximate to it, when I tell you that he vouchsafes neither surprise nor astonishment at the class of people with whom we now associate; nor does he appear to recognize in them anything more exalted than our old neighbors at Bruff.

Mamma gave him some rather sharp lessons on this score, which it is only fair to say that he bore with perfect good breeding. Upon the whole, he is really what would be called very agreeable, and, unquestionably, very good-looking. I sang for him two things out of Verdi's last opera of the "Trovatore;" but I soon discovered that music was one of the tastes he had not cultivated, nor did he evince any knowledge whatever when the conversation turned on dress. In fact, dearest, it is only your really fashionable man ever attains to a nice appreciation of this theme, or has a true sentiment for the poetry of costume.

Sir Morris and he seemed to have fallen into a sudden friendship, and found that they agreed precisely in their opinion about Etruscan vases, frescos, and pre-Raphaelite art, — subjects which, I own, general good-breeding usually excludes from discussion where there are pretty girls to talk to. Cary, of course, was in esctasies with all this; she thought — or fancied she thought — Morris most agreeable, whereas it was really the other man that "made all the running."

James arrived while we were at supper, and, the first little awkwardness of the meeting over, became excellent friends with Morris. With all his cold, unattractive qualities, I am sure that Morris is a very amiable and worthy person; and if Cary likes him, I see no reason in life to refuse such an excellent offer, — always provided that it be made. But of this, Kitty, I must be permitted to doubt, since he informed us that he was daily expecting his yacht out from England, and was about to sail on a voyage which might possibly occupy upwards of two years. He pressed Mr. B. strongly to accompany him, assuring him that he now possessed influence sufficient to reinstate him in his career at his return. I 'm not quite certain that the proposal, when more formally renewed, will not be accepted.

I must tell you that I overheard Morris say, in a whisper to Belton, "I 'm sure if you ask her, Lady Louisa will give you leave." Can it be that the doctor has dared to aspire to a Lady Louisa? I almost fancy it may be so, dearest, and that this presumption is the true explanation of all his cool self-sufficiency. I only want to be certain of this to hate him thoroughly.

Just before they took their leave a most awkward incident occurred. Mr. B., in answer to some question from Morris, took out his tablets to look over his engagements for the next day: "Ah! by the way," said he, "that must not be forgotten. There is a certain scampish relative of Lord Darewood, for whom I have been entrusted with a somewhat disagreable commission. This hopeful young gentleman has at last discovered that his wits, when exercised within legal limits, will not support him, and though he has contrived to palm himself off as a man of fashion on some second-rate folks who know no better, his skill at *écarté* and lansquenet fails to meet his requirements. He has, accordingly, taken a higher flight, and actually committed a forgery. The Earl whose name was counterfeited has paid the bill, but charged me with the task of acquainting his nephew with his knowledge of the fraud, and as frankly assuring him that, if the offence be repeated, he shall pay its penalty. I assure you I wish the duty had devolved upon any other, though, from all I have heard, anything like feelings of respect or compassion would be utterly thrown away if bestowed on such an object as Lord George Tiverton."

Oh, Kitty, the last words were not needed to make the cup of my anguish run over. At every syllable he uttered, the conviction of what was coming grew stronger; and though I maintained consciousness to the end, it was by a struggle that almost convulsed me.

As for mamma, she flew out in a violent passion, called Lord Darewood some very hard names, and did not spare his emissary; fortunately, her feelings so far overcame her that she became totally unintelligible, and was carried away to her room in hysterics. As I was obliged to follow her, I was unable to hear more. But to what end should I desire it? Is not this last disappointment more than enough to discourage all hope and trustfulness forever? Shall my heart ever open again to a sense of confidence in any?

When I sat down to write, I had firmly resolved not to reveal this disgraceful event to you; but somehow, Kitty, in the overflowing of a heart that has no recesses against you, it has come forth, and I leave it so.

James came to my room later on, and told me such dreadful stories — he had heard them from Morris — of Lord G. that I really felt my brain turning as I listened to him; that the separation from his wife was all a pretence, — part of a plot arranged between them; that she, under the semblance of desertion, attracted to her the compassion — in some cases the affection — of young men of fortune, from whom her husband exacted the most enormous sums; that James himself had been marked out for a victim in this way; in fact, Kitty, I cannot go on: a web of such infamy was exposed as I firmly believed, till then, impossible to exist, and a degree of baseness laid bare that, for the sake of human nature, I trust has not its parallel.

I can write no more. Tears of shame as well as sorrow are blotting my paper, and in my self-abasement I feel how changed I must have become, when, in reflecting over such disgrace as this, I have a single thought but of contempt for one so lost and dishonored.

Yours in the depth of affliction,

MARY ANNE DODD.

LETTER XXX.

KENNY JAMES DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., OF THE GRANGE, BRUFF.

FLORENCE.

MY DEAR TOM, — I have had a busy week of it, and even now I scarcely perceive that the day is come when I can rest and repose myself. The pleasure-life of this same capital is a very exhausting process, and to do the thing well, a man's constitution ought to be in as healthy a condition as his cash account! Now, Tom, it is an unhappy fact, that I am a very "low letter" in both person and pocket, and I should be sorely puzzled to say whether I find it harder to dance or to pay for the music!

Don't fancy that I 'm grumbling, now; not a bit of it, old fellow; I have had my day, and as pleasant a one as most men. And if a man starts in life with a strong fund of genial liking for his fellows, enjoying society less for its display than for its own resources in developing the bright side of human nature, take my word for it, he 'll carry on with him, as he goes, memories and recollections enough to make his road agreeable, and, what is far better, to render himself companionable to others.

You tell me you want to hear "all about Florence," — a modest request, truly! Why, man, I might fill a volume with my own short experiences, and afterwards find that the whole could be condensed into a foot-note for the bottom of a page. In the first place, there are at least half a dozen distinct aspects in this place, which are almost as many cities. There is the Florence of Art, — of pictures, statues, churches, frescos, a town of unbounded treasures in objects of high interest. There are galleries, where a whole life might be passed in cultivating the eye, refining the taste, and elevating the imagination. There is the Florence of Historical Association, with its palaces recalling the feudal age, and its castellated strongholds, telling of the stormy times before the "Medici." There is not a street, there is scarcely a house, whose name does not awaken some stirring event, and bring you back to the period when men were as great in crime as in genius. Here an inscription tells you Benvenuto Cellini lived and labored; yonder was the window of his studio; there the narrow street through which he walked at nightfall, his hand upon his rapier, and his left arm well enveloped in his mantle; there the stone where Dante used to sit; there the villa Boccaccio inhabited; there the lone tower where Galileo watched; there the house, unchanged in everything, of the greatest of them all, Michael Angelo himself. The pen sketches of his glorious conceptions adorn the walls, the half-finished models of his immortal works are on the brackets. That splendid palace on the sunny Arno was Alfieri's. Go where you will, in fact, a gorgeous story of the past reveals itself before you, and you stand before the great triumphs of human genius, with the spirit of the authors around and about you.

There is also Florence the Beautiful and the Picturesque; Florence the City of Fashion and Splendor; and, saddest of all, Florence garrisoned by the stranger, and held in subjection by the Austrian!

I entertain no bigoted animosity to the German, Tom; on the contrary, I like him; I like his manly simplicity of character, his thorough good faith, his unswerving loyalty; but I own to you, his figure is out of keeping with the picture here, — the very tones of his harsh gutturals grate painfully on the ears attuned to softer sounds. It is pretty nearly a hopeless quarrel when a Sovereign has recourse to a foreign intervention between himself and his subjects; as in private life, there is no reconciliation when you have once called Doctors' Commons to your councils. You may get damages; you 'll never have tranquillity. You 'll say, perhaps, the thing was inevitable, and could n't be helped. Nothing of the kind. Coercing the Tuscans by Austrian bayonets was like herding a flock of sheep with bull-dogs. I never saw a people who so little require the use of strong measures; the difficulty of ruling them lies not in their spirit of resistance, but in its very opposite, — a plastic facility of temper that gives way to every pressure. Just like a horse with an over-fine mouth, you never can have him in hand, and never know that he has stumbled till he is down.

It was the duty of our Government to have prevented this occupation, or at least to have set some limits to its amount and duration. We did neither, and our influence has grievously suffered in consequence. Probably at no recent period of history was the name of England so little respected in the entire peninsula as at present. And now, if I don't take care, I 'll really involve myself in a grumbling revery, so here goes to leave the subject at once.

These Italians, Tom, are very like the Irish. There is the same blending of mirth and melancholy in the national temperament, the same imaginative cast of thought, the same hopefulness, and the same indolence. In justice to our own people, I must say that they are the better of the two. Paddy has strong attachments, and is unquestionably courageous; neither of these qualities are conspicuous here. It would be ungenerous and unjust to pronounce upon the *naturel* of a people who for centuries have been subjected to every species of misrule, whose moral training has been also either neglected or corrupted, and whose only lessons have been those of craft and deception. It would be worse than rash to assume that a people so treated were unfitted for a freedom they never enjoyed, or unsuited to a liberty they never even heard of. Still, I may be permitted to doubt that Constitutional Government will ever find its home in the hearts of a Southern nation. The family, Tom, — the fireside, the domestic habits of a Northern people, are the normal schools for self-government. It is in the reciprocities of a household men learn to apportion their share of the burdens of life, and to work for the common weal. The fellow who with a handful of chestnuts can provision himself for a whole day, and who can pass the night under the shade of a fig-tree, acknowledges no such responsibilities. All-sufficing to himself, he recognizes no claims upon him for exertion in behalf of others; and as to the duties of citizenship, he would repudiate them as an intolerable burden. Take my word for it, Parliamentary Institutions will only flourish where you have coal-fires and carpets, and Elective Governments have a close affinity to easy-chairs and hearth-rugs!

You are curious to learn "how far familiarity with works of high art may have contributed to influence the national character of Italy." I don't like to dogmatize on such a subject, but so far as my own narrow experience goes, I am far from attributing any high degree of culture to this source. I even doubt whether objects of beauty suggest a high degree of enjoyment, except to intellects already cultivated. I suspect that your men of Glasgow or Manchester, who never saw anything more artistic than a power-loom and a spinning-jenny, would stand favorable comparison with him who daily passes beside the "Dying Gladiator" or the Farnese Hercules.

Of course I do not extend this opinion to the educated classes, amongst whom there is a very high range of acquirement and cultivation. They bring, moreover, to the knowledge of any subject a peculiar subtlety of perception, a certain Machiavellian ingenuity, such as I have never noticed elsewhere. A great deal of the national distrustfulness and suspicion has its root in this very habit, and makes me often resigned to Northern dulness for the sake of Northern reliance and good faith.

They are most agreeable in all the intercourse of society. Less full of small attentions than the French, less ceremonious than the Germans, they are easier in manner than either. They are natural to the very verge of indifference; but above all their qualities stands pre-eminent their good-nature. An ungenerous remark, a harsh allusion, an unkind anecdote, are utterly unknown amongst them, and all that witty smartness which makes the success of a French *salon* would find no responsive echo in an Italian drawing-room. In a word, Tom, they are eminently a people to live amongst. They do not contribute much, but they exact as little; and if never broken-hearted when you separate, they are delighted when you meet; falling in naturally with your humor, tolerant of anything and everything, except what gives trouble.

There now, my dear Tom, are all my Italian experiences in a few words. I feel that by a discreet use of my material I might have made a tureen with what I have only filled a teaspoon; but as I am not writing for the public, but only for Tom Purcell, I 'll not grumble at my wastefulness.

Of the society, what can I say that would not as well apply to any city of the same size as much resorted to by strangers? The world of fashion is pretty much the same thing everywhere; and though we may "change the venue," we are always pleading the same cause. They tell me that social liberty here is understood in a very liberal sense, and the right of private judgment on questions of morality exercised with a more than Protestant independence. I hear of things being done that could not be done elsewhere, and so on; but were I only to employ my own unassisted faculties, I should say that everything follows its ordinary routine, and that profligacy does not put on in Florence a single "travesty" that I have not seen at Brussels and Baden, and twenty similar places! True, people know each other very well, and discuss each other in all the privileged candor close friendship permits. This sincerity, abused as any good thing is liable to be, now and then grows scandalous; but still, Tom, though they may bespatter you with mud, nobody ever thinks you too dirty for society. In point of fact, there is a great deal of evil speaking, and very little malevolence; abundance of slander, but scarcely any ill-will. Mark you, these are what they tell me; for up to this moment I have not seen or heard anything but what has pleased me, — met much courtesy and some actual cordiality. And surely, if a man can chance upon a city where the climate is good, the markets well supplied, the women pretty, and the bankers tractable, he must needs be an ill-conditioned fellow not to rest satisfied with his good fortune. I don't mean to say I 'd like to pass my life here, no more than I would like to wear a domino, and spend the rest of my days in a masquerade, for the whole thing is just as unreal, just as unnatural; but it is wonderfully amusing for a while, and I enjoy it greatly.

From what I have seen of the world of pleasure, I begin to suspect that we English people are never likely to have any great success in our attempts at it; and for this simple reason, that we bring to our social hours exhausted bodies and fatigued minds; we labor hard all day in law courts or counting-houses or committee-rooms, and when evening comes are overcome by our exertions, and very little disposed for those efforts which make conversation brilliant, or intercourse amusing. Your foreigner, however, is a chartered libertine. He feels that nature never meant him for anything but idleness; he takes to frivolity naturally and easily; and, what is of no small importance too, without any loss of self-esteem! Ah, Tom! that is the great secret of it all. We never do our fooling gracefully. There is everlastingly rising up within us a certain bitter conviction that we are not doing fairly by ourselves, and that our faculties might be put to better and more noble uses than we have engaged them in. We walk the stage of life like an actor ashamed of his costume, and "our motley" never sets easily on us to the last. I think I had better stop dogmatizing, Tom. Heaven knows where it may lead me, if I don't. Old Woodcock says that "he might have been a vagabond, if Providence had n't made him a justice of the peace;" so I feel that it is not impossible I might have been a moral philosopher, if fate had n't made me the husband of Mrs. Dodd.

Wednesday Afternoon.

My dear Tom, — I had thought to have despatched this prosy epistle without being obliged to inflict you with any personal details of the Dodd family. I was even vaunting to myself that I had kept us all "out of the indictment," and now I discover that I have made a signal failure, and the codicil must revoke the whole body of the testament. How shall I ever get my head clear enough to relate all I want to tell you? I go looking after a stray idea the way I 'd chase a fellow in a crowded fair or market, catching a glimpse of him now — losing him again — here, with my hand almost on him, — and the next minute no sign of him! Try and follow me, however; don't quit me for a moment; and, above all, Tom, whatever vagaries I may fall into, be still assured that I have a road to go, if I only have the wit to discover it!

First of all about Morris, or Sir Morris, as I ought to call him. I told you in my last how warmly he had taken up Mrs. D.'s cause, and how mainly instrumental was he in her liberation. This being accomplished, however, I could not but perceive that he inclined to resume the cold and distant tone he had of late assumed towards us, and rather retire from, than incur, any renewal of our intimacy. When I was younger in the world, Tom, I believe I'd have let him follow his humor undisturbed; but with more mature experience of life, I have come to see that one often sacrifices a real friendship in the indulgence of some petty regard to a ceremonial usage, and so I resolved at least to know the why, if I could, of Morris's conduct.

I went frankly to him at his hotel, and asked for an explanation. He stared at me for a second or two without speaking, and then said something about the shortness of my memory, — a recent circumstance, — and such like, that I could make nothing of. Seeing my embarrassment, he appeared slightly irritated, and proceeded to unlock a writing-desk on the table before him, saying hurriedly, —

"I shall be able to refresh your recollection, and when you read over — " He stopped, clasped his hand to his forehead suddenly, and, as if overcome, threw himself down into a seat, deeply agitated. "Forgive me," said he at length, "if I ask you a question or two. You remember being ill at Genoa, don't you?"

"Perfectly."

"You can also remember receiving a letter from me at that time?"

"No, — nothing of the kind!"

"No letter? — you received no letter of mine?"

"None!"

"Oh, then, this must really — " He paused, and, overcoming what I saw was a violent burst of indignation, he walked the room up and down for several minutes. "Mr. Dodd," said he to me, taking my hand in both his own, "I have to entreat your forgiveness for a most mistaken impression on my part influencing me in my relations, and suggesting a degree of coldness and distrust which, owing to your manliness of character alone, has not ended in our estrangement forever. I believed you had been in possession of a letter from me; I thought until this moment that it really had reached you. I now know that I was mistaken, and have only to express my sincere contrition for having acted under a rash credulity." He went over this again and again, always, as it seemed to me, as if about to say more, and then suddenly checking himself under what appeared to be a quickly remembered reason for reserve.

I was getting impatient at last. I thought that the explanation explained little, and was really about to say so; but he anticipated me by saying, "Believe me, my dear sir, any suffering, any unhappiness that my error has occasioned, has fallen entirely upon me. *You* at least have nothing to complain of. The letter which ought to have reached you contained a proposal from me for the hand of your younger daughter; a proposal which I now make to you, happily, in a way that cannot be frustrated by an accident." He went on to press his suit, Tom, eagerly and warmly; but still with that scrupulous regard to truthfulness I have ever remarked in him. He acknowledged the difference in age, the difference in character, the disparity between Cary's joyous, sunny nature and his own colder mood; but he hoped for happiness, on grounds so solid and so reasonable that showed me much of his own thoughtful habit of mind.

Of his fortune, he simply said that it was very far above all his requirements; that he himself had few, if any, expensive tastes, but was amply able to indulge such in a wife, if she were disposed to cultivate them. He added that he knew my daughter had always been accustomed to habits of luxury and expense, always lived in a style that included every possible gratification, and therefore, if not in possession of ample means, he never would have presumed on his present offer.

I felt for a moment the vulgar pleasure that such flattery confers. I own to you, Tom, I experienced a degree of satisfaction at thinking that even to the observant eyes of Morris himself,—old soldier as he was,—the Dodds had passed for brilliant and fashionable folk, in the fullest enjoyment of every gift of fortune; but as quickly a more honest and more manly impulse overcame this thought, and in a few words I told him that he was totally mistaken; that I was a poor, half-ruined Irish gentleman, with an indolent tenantry and an encumbered estate; that our means afforded no possible pretension to the style in which we lived, nor the society we mixed in; that it would require years of patient economy and privation to repay the extravagance into which our foreign tour had launched us; and that, so convinced was I of the inevitable ruin a continuance of such a life must incur, I had firmly resolved to go back to Ireland at the end of the present month and never leave it again for the rest of my days.

I suppose I spoke warmly, for I felt deeply. The shame many of the avowals might have cost me in calmer mood was forgotten now, in my ardent determination to be honest and above-board. I was resolved, too, to make amends to my own heart for all the petty deceptions I had descended to in a former case, and, even at the cost of the loss of a son-in-law, to secure a little sense of self-esteem.

He would not let me finish, Tom, but, grasping my hand in his with a grip I did n't believe he was capable of, he said, —

"Dodd," — he forgot the Mr. this time, — "Dodd, you are an honest, true-hearted fellow, and I always thought so. Consent now to my entreaty,— at least do not refuse it, — and I 'd not exchange my condition with that of any man in Europe!"

Egad, I could not have recognized him as he spoke, for his cheek colored up, and his eye flashed, and there was a dash of energy about him I had never detected in his nature. It was just the quality I feared he was deficient in. Ay, Tom, I can't deny it, old Celt that I am, I would n't give a brass farthing for a fellow whose temperament cannot be warmed up to some burst of momentary enthusiasm!

Of my hearty consent and my good wishes I speedily assured him, just adding, "Cary must say the rest." I told him frankly that I saw it was a great match for my daughter; that both in rank and fortune he was considerably above what she might have looked for; but with all that, if she herself would n't have taken him in his days of humbler destiny, my advice would be, "don't have him now."

He left me for a moment to say something to his mother, — I suppose some explanation about this same letter that went astray, and of which I can make nothing, — and then they came back together. The old lady seemed as well pleased as her son, and told me that his choice was her own in every respect. She spoke of Cary with the most hearty affection; but with all her praise of her, she does n't know half her real worth; but even what she did say brought the tears to my eyes, — and I 'm afraid I made a fool of myself!

You may be sure, Tom, that it was a happy day with me, although, for a variety of reasons, I was obliged to keep my secret for my own heart. Morris proposed that he should be permitted to wait on us the next morning, to pay his respects to Mrs. D. upon her liberation, and thus his visit might be made the means of reopening our acquaintance. You 'd think that to these arrangements, so simple and natural, one might look forward with an easy tranquillity. So did I. Tom, — and so was I mistaken. Mr. James, whose conduct latterly seems to have pendulated between monastic severity and the very wildest dissipation, takes it into his wise head that Morris has insulted him. He thinks — no, not thinks, but dreams — that this calm-tempered, quiet gentleman is pursuing an organized system of outrage towards him, and has for a time back made him the mark of his sarcastic pleasantry. Full of this sage conceit, he hurries off to his hotel, to offer him a personal insult. They fortunately do not meet; but James, ordering pen and paper, sits down and indites a letter. I have not seen it; but even his friend considers it to have been "a step ill-advised and inconsiderate, — in fact, to be deeply regretted."

I cannot conjecture what might have been Morris's conduct under other circumstances, but in his present relations to myself, he saw probably but one course open to him. He condescended to overlook the terms of this insulting note, and calmly asked for an explanation of it. By great good luck, James had placed the affair in young Belton's hands, — our former doctor at Bruff, — who chanced to be on his way through here; and thus, by the good sense of one, and the calm temper of the other, this rash boy has been rescued from one of the most causeless quarrels ever heard of. James had started for Modena, I believe, with a carpet-bag full of cigars, a French novel, and a bullet-mould; but before he had arrived at his destination, Morris, Belton, and myself were laughing heartily over the whole adventure. Morris's conduct throughout the entire business raised him still higher in my esteem; and the consummate good tact with which he avoided the slightest reflection that might pain me on my son's score, showed me that he was a thorough gentleman. I must say, too, that Belton behaved admirably. Brief as has been his residence abroad, he has acquired the habits of a perfect man of the world, but without sacrificing a jot of his truly frank and generous temperament.

Ah, Tom! it was not without some sharp self-reproaches that I saw this young fellow, poor and friendless as he started in life, struggling with that hard fate that insists upon a man's feeling independent in spirit, and humble in manner, fighting that bitter battle contained in a dispensary doctor's life, emerge at once into an accomplished, well-informed gentleman, well versed in all the popular topics of the day, and evidently stored with a deeper and more valuable kind of knowledge, — I say, I saw all this, and thought of my own boy, bred up with what were unquestionably greater advantages and better opportunities of learning, not obliged to adventure on a career in his mere student years, but with ample time and leisure for cultivation; and yet there he was, — there he is, this minute, — and there is not a station nor condition in life wherein he could earn half a crown a day. He was educated, as it is facetiously called, at Dr. Stingem's school. He read his Homer and Virgil, wrote his false quantities, and blundered through his Greek themes, like the rest. He went through — it's a good phrase — some books of Euclid, and covered reams of foolscap with equations; and yet, to this hour, he can't translate a classic, nor do a sum in common arithmetic, while his handwriting is a cuneiform character that defies a key: and with all that, the boy is not a fool, nor deficient in teachable qualities. I hope and trust this system is coming to an end. I wish sincerely, Tom, that we may have seen the last of a teaching that for one whom it made accomplished and well-informed, converted fifty into pedants, and left a hundred dunces! Intelligible spelling, and readable writing, a little history, and the "rule of three," some geography, a short course of chemistry and practical mathematics, — that's not too much, I think, — and yet I'd be easy in my mind if James had gone that far, even though he were ignorant of "spondees," and had never read a line of that classic morality they call the Heathen Mythology. I'd not have touched upon this ungrateful theme, but that my thoughts have been running on the advantages we were to have derived from our foreign tour, and some misgivings striking me as to their being realized.

Perhaps we are not very docile subjects, perhaps we set about the thing in a wrong way, perhaps we had not stored our minds with the preliminary knowledge necessary, perhaps — anything you like, in short; but here we are, in all essentials, as ignorant of everything a residence abroad might be supposed to teach, as though we had never quitted Dodsborough. Stop — I'm going too fast — we *have* learned some things not usually acquired at home; we have attained to an extravagant passion for dress, and an inordinate love of grand acquaintances. Mary Anne is an advanced student in modern French romance literature; James no mean proficient at écarté; Mrs. D. has added largely to the stock of what she calls her "knowledge of life," by familiar intimacy with a score of people who ought to be at the galleys; and I, with every endeavor to oppose the tendency, have grown as suspicious as a government spy, and as meanly inquisitive about other people's affairs as though I were prime minister to an Italian prince.

We have lost that wholesome reserve with respect to mere acquaintances, and by which our manner to our friends attained to its distinctive signs of cordiality, for now we are on the same terms with all the world. The code is, to be charmed with everything and everybody, — with their looks, with their manners, with their house and their liveries, with their table and their "toilette," — ay, even with their vices! There is the great lesson, Tom; you grow lenient to everything save the reprobation of wrong, and *that* you set down for rank hypocrisy, and cry out against as the blackest of all the blemishes of humanity.

Nor is it a small evil that our attachment to home is weakened, and even a sense of shame engendered with respect to a hundred little habits and customs that to foreign eyes appear absurd — and perhaps vulgar. And lastly comes the great question, How are we ever to live in our own country again, with all these exotic notions and opinions? I don't mean how are *we* to bear *Ireland*, but how is *Ireland* to endure *us!* An American shrewdly remarked to me t'other day, "that one of the greatest difficulties of the slave question was, how to emancipate the slave *owners;* how to liberate the shackles of their rusty old prejudices, and fit them to stand side by side with real freemen." And in a vast variety of questions you 'll often discover that the puzzle is on the side opposite to that we had been looking at. In this way do I feel that all my old friends will have much to overlook, — much to forgive in my present moods of thinking. I 'll no more be able to take interest in home politics again than I could live on potatoes! My sympathies are now more catholic. I can feel acutely for Schleswig-Holstein, or the Druses at Lebanon. I am deeply interested about the Danubian Provinces, and strong on Sebastopol; but I regard as contemptible the cares of a quarter sessions, or the business of the "Union." If you want me to listen, you must talk of the Cossacks, or the war in the Caucasus; and I am far less anxious about who may be the new member for Bruff, than who will be the next "Vladica" of "Montenegro."

These ruminations of mine might never come to a conclusion, Tom, if it were not that I have just received a short note from Belton, with a pressing entreaty that he may see me at once on a matter of importance to myself, and I have ordered a coach to take me over to his hotel. If I can get back in time for post hour, I 'll be able to explain the reason of this sudden call, till when I say adieu.

LETTER XXXI.

MISS CAROLINE DODD TO MISS COX, AT MISS MINCING'S ACADEMY, BLACK ROCK, IRELAND.

FLORENCE.

MY DEAREST MISS COX, — It would be worse than ingratitude in me were I to defer telling you how happy I am, and with what a perfect shower of favors Fortune has just overwhelmed me! Little thought I, a few weeks back, that Florence was to become to me the spot nearest and dearest to my heart, associated as it is, and ever must be, with the most blissful event of my life! Sir Penrhyn Morris, who, from some unexplained misconception, had all but ceased to know us, was accidentally thrown in our way by the circumstance of mamma's imprisonment. By his kind and zealous aid her liberation was at length accomplished, and, as a matter of course, he called to make his inquiries after her, and receive our grateful acknowledgments.

I scarcely can tell — my head is too confused to remember — the steps by which he retraced his former place in our intimacy. It is possible there may have been explanations on both sides. I only know that he took his leave one morning with the very coldest of salutations, and appeared on the next day with a manner of the deepest devotion, so evidently directed towards myself that it would have been downright affectation to appear indifferent to it.

He asked me in a low and faltering voice if I would accord him a few moments' interview. He spoke the words with a degree of effort at calmness that gave them a most significant meaning, and I suddenly remembered a certain passage in one of your letters to me, wherein you speak of the inconsiderate conduct which girls occasionally pursue in accepting the attentions of men whose difference in age would seem to exclude them from the category of suitors. So far from having incurred this error, I had actually retreated from any advances on his part, not from the disparity of our ages, but from the far wider gulfs that separated *his* highly cultivated and informed mind from *my* ungifted and unstored intellect. Partly in shame at my inferiority, partly with a conscious sense of what his impression of me must be, I avoided, so far as I could, his intimacy; and even when domesticated with him, I sought for occupations in which he could not join, and estranged myself from the pursuits which he loved to practise.

Oh, my dear, kind governess, how thoroughly I recognize the truthfulness of all your views of life; how sincerely I own that I have never followed them without advantage, never neglected them without loss! How often have you told me that "dissimulation is never good;" that, however speciously we may persuade ourselves that in feigning a part we are screening our self-esteem from insult, or saving the feelings of others, the policy is ever a bad one; and that, "if our sincerity be only allied with an honest humility, it never errs." The pains I took to escape from the dangerous proximity of his presence suggested to him that I disliked his attentions, and desired to avoid them; and acting on this conviction it was that he made a journey to England during the time I was a visitor at his mother's. It would appear, however, that his esteem for me had taken a deeper root than he perhaps suspected, for on his return his attentions were redoubled, and I could detect that in a variety of ways his feelings towards me were not those of mere friendship. Of mine towards him I will conceal nothing from you. They were deep and intense admiration for qualities of the highest order, and as much of love as consisted with a kind of fear, — a sense of almost terror lest he should resent the presumption of such affection as mine.

You already know something of our habits of life abroad, — wasteful and extravagant beyond all the pretensions of our fortune. It was a difficult thing for me to carry on the semblance of our assumed position so as not to throw discredit upon my family, and at the same time avoid the disingenuousness of such a part. The struggle, from which I saw no escape, was too much for me, and I determined to leave the Morrises and return home, — to leave a house wherein I already had acquired the first steps of the right road in life, and go back to dissipations in which I felt no pleasure, and gayeties that never enlivened! I did not tell you all this at the time, my dear friend, partly because I had not the courage for it, and partly that the avowal might seem to throw a reproach on those whom my affection should shield from even a criticism. If I speak of it now, it is because, happily, the theme is one hourly discussed amongst us in all the candor of true frankness. We have no longer concealments, and we are happy.

It may have been that the abruptness of my departure offended Captain Morris, or, possibly, some other cause produced the estrangement; but, assuredly, he no longer cultivated the intimacy he had once seemed so ardently to desire, and, until the event of mamma's misfortune here, he ceased to visit us.

And now came the interview I have alluded to! Oh, my dearest friend, if there be a moment in life which combines within it the most exquisite delight with the most torturing agony, it is that in which an affection is sought for by one who, immeasurably above us in all the gifts of fortune, still seems to feel that there is a presumption in his demand, and that his appeal may be rejected. I know not how to speak of that conflict between pride and shame, between the ecstasy of conquest and the innate sense of the unworthiness that had won the victory!

Sir Penrhyn thought, or fancied he thought, me fond of display and splendor, — that in conforming to the quiet habits of his mother's house, I was only submitting with a good grace to privations. I undeceived him at once. I confessed, not without some shame, that I was in a manner unsuited to the details of an exalted station, — that wealth and its accompaniments would, in reality, be rather burdens than pleasure to one whose tastes were humble as my own, — that, in fact, I was so little of a "Grande Dame" that I should inevitably break down in the part, and that no appliances of mere riches could repay for the onerous duties of dispensing them.

"In so much," interrupted he, with a half-smile, "that you would prefer a poor man to a rich one?"

"If you mean," said I, "a poor man who felt no shame in his poverty, in comparison with a rich man who felt his pride in his wealth, I say, Yes."

"Then what say you to one who has passed through both ordeals," said he, "and only asks that you should share either with him to make him happy?"

I have no need to tell you my answer. It satisfied *him*, and made mine the happiest heart in the world. And now we are to be married, dearest, in a fortnight or three weeks, — as soon, in fact, as maybe; and then we are to take a short tour to Rome and Naples, where Sir Penrhyn's yacht is to meet us; after which we visit Malta, coast along Spain, and home. Home sounds delightfully when it means all that one's fondest fancies can weave of country, of domestic happiness, of duties heartily entered on, and of affections well repaid.

Penrhyn is very splendid; the castle is of feudal antiquity, and the grounds are princely in extent and beauty. Sir Morris is justly proud of his ancestral possessions, and longs to show me its stately magnificence; but still more do I long for the moment when my dear Miss Cox will be my guest, and take up her quarters in a certain little room that opens on a terraced garden overlooking the sea. I fixed on the spot the very instant I saw a drawing of the castle, and I am certain you will not find it in your heart to refuse me what will thus make up the perfect measure of my happiness.

In all the selfishness of my joy, I have forgotten to tell you of Florence; but, in truth, it would require a calmer head than mine to talk of galleries and works of art while my thoughts are running on the bright realities of my condition. It is true we go everywhere and see everything, but I am in such a humor to be pleased that I am delighted with all, and can be critical to nothing. I half suspect that art, as art, is a source of pleasure to a very few. I mean that the number is a limited one which can enter into all the minute excellences of a great work, appreciate justly the difficulties overcome, and value deservingly the real triumph accomplished. For myself, I know and feel that painting has its greatest charm for me in its power of suggestiveness, and, consequently, the subject is often of more consequence than the treatment of it; not that I am cold to the chaste loveliness of a Raphael, or indifferent to the gorgeous beauty of a Giordano. They appeal to me, however, in somewhat the same way, and my mind at once sets to work upon an ideal character of the creation before me. That this same admiration of mine is a very humble effort at appreciating artistic excellence, I want no better proof than the fact that it is exactly what Betty Cobb herself felt on being shown the pictures in "the Pitti." Her honest worship of a Madonna at once invested her with every attribute of goodness, and the painter, could he only have heard the praises she uttered, might have revelled in the triumph of an art that can rise above the mere delineation of external beauty. That the appeal to her own heart was direct, was evidenced by her constant reference to some living resemblance to the picture before her. Now it was a saintly hermit by Caracci, — that was the image of Peter Delany at the cross-roads; now it was a Judas, — that was like Tom Noon of the turnpike; and now it was a lovely head by Titian, — the "very moral of Miss Kitty Doolan, when her hair was down about her." I am certain, my dearest Miss Cox, that the delight conveyed by painting and music is a much more natural pleasure than that derived from the enjoyment of imaginary composition by writing. The appeal is not alone direct, but it is in a manner the same to all, — to the highest king upon the throne, and to the lowly peasant, as in meek wonder he stands entranced and enraptured.

But why do I loiter within doors when it is of Florence itself, of its sunny Arno, of its cypress-crowned San Miniato, and of the villa-clad Fiezole I would tell you! But even these are so interwoven with the frame of mind in which I now enjoy them, that to speak of them would be again to revert to my selfishness.

Yesterday we made an excursion to Vallambrosa, which lies in a cleft between two lofty mountains, about thirteen miles from this. It was a strange transition from the warm air and sunny streets of Florence, with all their objects of artistic wonder on every side, to find one's self suddenly traversing a wild mountain gorge in a rude bullock-cart, guided by a peasant of semi-savage aspect, his sheepskin mantle and long ox-goad giving a picturesque air to his tall and sinewy figure. The snow lay heavily in all the crevices around, and it was a perfectly Alpine scene in its desolation; nor, I must say, did it recall a single one of the ideas with which our great poet has associated it. The thickly strewn leaves have no existence here, since the trees are not deciduous, and consist entirely of pines.

A straight avenue in the forest leads to the convent, which is of immense size, forming a great quadrangle. At a little distance off, sheltered by a thick grove of tall pines, stands a small building appropriated to the accommodation of strangers, who are the guests of the monks for any period short of three days, and by a special permission for even a longer time.

We passed the day and the night there, and I would willingly have lingered still longer. From the mountain peak above the convent the two seas at either side of the peninsula are visible, and the Gulf of Genoa and the Adriatic are stretched out at your feet, with the vast plain of Central Italy, dotted over with cities, every name of which is a spell to memory! Thence back to Florence, and all that gay world that seemed so small to the eye the day before! And now, dearest Miss Cox, let me conclude, ere my own littleness become more apparent; for here I am, tossing over laces and embroidery, gazing with rapture at brooches and bracelets, and actually fancying how captivating I shall be when apparelled in all this finery. It would be mere deceitfulness in me were I to tell you that I am not charmed with the splendor that surrounds me. Let me only hope that it may not corrupt that heart which at no time was more entirely your own than while I write myself yours affectionately,

CAROLINE DODD.

LETTER XXXII.

KENNY JAMES DODD TO THOMAS PURCELL, ESQ., OF THE GRANGE, BRUFF.

FLORENCE.

WELL, my dear Tom, my task is at last completed, — my *magnum opus* accomplished. I have carried all my measures, if not with triumphant majorities, at least with a "good working party," as the slang has it, and I stand proudly pre-eminent the head of the Dodd Administration. I have no patience for details. I like better to tell you the results in some striking paragraph, to be headed "Latest Intelligence," and to run thus: "Our last advices inform us that, notwithstanding the intrigues in the Cabinet, K. I. maintains his ascendency. We have no official intelligence of the fact, but all the authorities concur in believing that the Dodds are about to leave the Continent and return to Ireland."

Ay, Tom, that is the grand and comprehensive measure of family reform I have so long labored over, and at length have the proud gratification to see Law!

I find, on looking back, that I left off on my being sent for by Belton. I'll try and take up one of the threads of my tangled narrative at that point. I found him at his hotel in conversation with a very smartly dressed, well-whiskered, kid-gloved little man, whom he presented as "Mr. Curl Davis, of Lincoln's Inn." Mr. D. was giving a rather pleasant account of the casualties of his first trip to Italy when I entered, but immediately stopped, and seemed to think that the hour of business should usurp the time of mere amusement.

Belton soon informed me why, by telling me that Mr. C. D. was a London collector who transacted the foreign affairs for various discounting houses at home, and who held a roving commission to worry, harass, and torment all such and sundry as might have drawn, signed, or endorsed bills, either for their own accommodation or that of their friends.

Now, I had not the most remote notion how I should come to figure in this category. I knew well that you had "taken care of" — that 's the word — all my little missives in that fashion. So persuaded was I of my sincerity that I offered him at once a small wager that he had mistaken his man, and that it was, in fact, some other Dodd, bent on bringing our honorable name to shame and disgrace.

"It must, under these circumstances, then," said he, "be a very gross case of forgery, for the name is yours; nor can I discover any other with the same Christian names." So saying, he produced a pocket-book, like a family Bible, and drew from out a small partition of it a bill for five hundred pounds, at nine months, drawn and endorsed by me in favor of the Hon. Augustus Gore Hampton!

This precious document had now about fifty-two hours some odd minutes to run. In other words, it was a crocodile's egg with the shell already bursting, and the reptile's head prepared to spring out.

"The writing, if not yours, is an admirable imitation," said Davis, surveying it through his double eye-glass.

"Is it yours?" asked Belton.

"Yes," said I, with a great effort to behave like an ancient Roman.

"Ah, then, it is all correct," said Davis, smirking. "I am charmed to find that the case presents no difficulty whatsoever."

"I 'm not quite so certain of that, sir," said I; "I take a very different view of the transaction."

"Don't be alarmed, Mr. Dodd," said he, coaxingly, "we are not Shylocks. We will meet your convenience in any way; in fact, it is with that sole object I have come out from England. 'Don't negotiate it,' said Mr. Gore Hampton to me, 'if you can possibly help it; see Mr. D. himself, ask what arrangement will best suit him, take half the amount in cash, and renew the bill at three months, rather than push him to an inconvenience.' I assure you these were his own words, for there is n't a more generous fellow breathing than Gore." Mr. Davis uttered this with a kind of hearty expansiveness, as though to say, "The man 's my friend, and let me see who 'll gainsay me."

"Am I at liberty to inquire into the circumstances of this transaction?" said Belton, who had been for some minutes attentively examining the bill, and the several names upon it, and comparing the writing with some other that he held in his hand.

I half scrupled to say "Yes" to this request, Tom. If there be anything particularly painful in shame above all others, it is for an old fellow to come to confession of his follies to a young one. It reverses their relative stations to each other so fatally that they never can stand rightly again. He saw this, or he seemed to see it, in a second, by my hesitation, for, quickly turning to Mr. Davis, he said, "Our meeting here is a most opportune one, as you will perceive by this paper," — giving him a letter as he spoke. Although I paid little attention to these words, I was soon struck by the change that had come over Mr. Davis. The fresh and rosy cheek was now blanched, the easy smile had departed, and a look of terror and dismay was exhibited in its place.

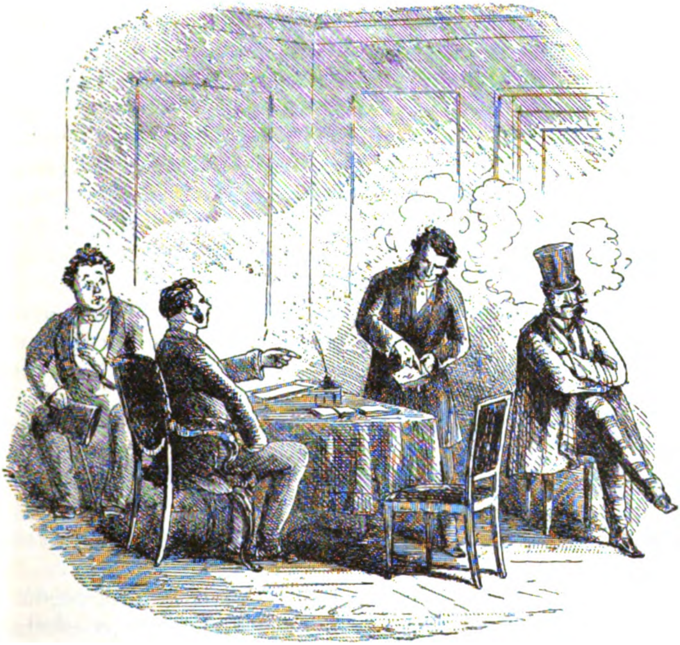
"Now, sir," said Belton, folding up the document, "you see I have been very frank with you. The charges contained in that letter I am in a position to prove. The Earl of Darewood has placed all the papers in my hands, and given me full permission as to how I shall employ them. Mr. Dodd," said he, addressing me, "if I am not at liberty to ask you the history of that bill, there is at least nothing to prevent *my* informing *you* that all the names upon it are those of men banded together for purposes of fraud."

"Take care what you say, sir," said Davis, affecting to write down his words, but in his confusion unable to form a letter.

"I shall accept your caution as it deserves," said Belton, "and say that they are a party of professional swindlers, — men who cheat at play, intimidate for money, and even commit forgery for it."

Davis moved towards the door, but Belton anticipated him, and he sat down again without a word.

"Now, Mr. Davis," said he, calmly, "it is left entirely to my discretion in what way I am to proceed with respect to one of the parties to these frauds." As he got thus far, the waiter entered, and presented a visiting-card, on which Belton said, "Yes, show him upstairs;" and the next minute Lord George Tiverton made his appearance. He was already in the middle of the room ere he perceived me, and for the first time in my life I saw signs of embarrassment and shame on his impassive features.



"They told me you were alone, Mr. Belton," said he, angrily, and as if about to retire.

"For all the purposes you have come upon, my Lord, it is the same as though I were."

"Is it blown, then?" asked his Lordship of Davis; and the other replied with an almost imperceptible nod. Muttering what sounded like a curse, Tiverton threw himself into a chair, drawing his hat, which he still wore, more deeply over his eyes.

I assure you, Tom, that so overwhelmed was I by this distressing scene, — for, say what you will, there is nothing so distressing as to see the man with whom you have lived in intimacy, if not actual friendship, suddenly displayed in all the glaring colors of scoundrelism. You feel yourself so humiliated before such a spectacle, that the sense of shame becomes like an atmosphere around you; I actually heard nothing, — I saw nothing. A scene of angry discussion ensued between Belton and the lawyer — Tiverton never uttered a word — of which I caught not one syllable. I could only mark, at last, that Belton had gained the upper hand, and in the other's subdued manner and submissive tone defeat was plainly written.

"Will Mr. Dodd deny his liability?" cried out Davis; and though, I suppose, he must have said the words many times over, I could not bring myself to suppose they were addressed to me.

"I shall not ask him that question," said Belton, "but *you* may."

"Hang it, Curl! you know it was a 'plant,'" said Tiverton, who was now smoking a cigar as coolly as possible. "What 's the use of pushing them further? We 've lost the game, man!"

"Just so, my Lord," said Belton; "and notwithstanding all his pretended boldness, nobody is more aware of that fact than Mr. Curl Davis, and the sooner he adopts your Lordship's frankness the quicker will this affair be settled."

Belton and the lawyer conversed eagerly together in half-whispers. I could only overhear a stray word or two; but they were enough to show me that Davis was pressing for some kind of a compromise, to which the other would not accede, and the terms of which came down successively from five hundred pounds to three, two, one, and at last fifty.

"No, nor five, sir, — not five shillings in such a cause!"

said Belton, determinedly. "I should feel it an indelible disgrace upon me forever to concede one farthing to a scheme so base and contemptible. Take my word for it, to escape exposure in such a case is no slight immunity."

Davis still demurred, but it was rather with the disciplined resistance of a well-trained rascal than with the ardor of a strong conviction.

The altercation — for it was such — interested me wonderfully little, my attention being entirely bestowed on Tiverton, who had now lighted his third cigar, which he was smoking away vigorously, never once bestowing a look towards me, nor in any way seeming to recognize my presence. A sudden pause in the discussion attracted me, and I saw that Mr. Davis was handing over several papers, which, to my practical eye, resembled bills, to Belton, who carefully perused each of them in turn before enclosing them in his pocket-book.

"Now, my Lord, I am at your service," said Belton; "but I presume our interview may as well be without witnesses."

"I should like to have Davis here," replied Tiverton, languidly; "seeing how you have bullied *him* only satisfies me how little chance *I* shall have with you."

Not waiting to hear an answer to this speech, I arose and took my hat, and pressing Belton's hand cordially as I asked him to dinner for that day, I hurried out of the room. Not, however, without his having time to whisper to me, —

"That affair is all arranged, — have no further uneasiness on the subject."

I was in the street in the midst of the moving, bustling population, with all the life, din, and turmoil of a great city around me, and yet I stood confounded and overwhelmed by what I had just witnessed. "And this," said I, at last, "is the way the business of the world goes on, — robbery, cheating, intimidation, and overreaching are the politenesses men reciprocate with each other!" Ah, Tom, with what scanty justice we regard our poor hard-working, half-starved, and ragged people, when men of rank, station, and refinement are such culprits as this! Nor could I help confessing that if I had passed my life at home, in my own country, such an instance as I had just seen had, in all likelihood, never occurred to me. The truth is that there is a simplicity in the life of poor countries that almost excludes such a craft as that of a swindler. Society must be a complex and intricate machinery where *they* are to thrive. There must be all the thousand requirements that are begotten of a pampered and luxurious civilization, and all the faults and frailties that grow out of these. Your well-bred scoundrel trades upon the follies, the weaknesses, the foibles, rather than the vices of the world, and his richest harvest lies amongst those who have ambitions above their station, and pretensions unsuited to their property, — in one word, to the "Dodds of this world, whether they issue from Tipperary or Yorkshire, whether their tongue betray the Celt or the Saxon!"

I grew very moral on this theme as I walked along, and actually found myself at my own door before I knew where I was. I discovered that Morris and his mother had been visiting Mrs. D. in my absence, and that the interview had passed off satisfactorily Cary's bright and cheery looks sufficiently assured me. Perhaps she was "not i' the vein," or perhaps she was awed by the presence of real wealth and fortune, but I was glad to find that Mrs. D. scarcely more than alluded to the splendors of Dodsborough; nor did she bring in the M'Carthys more than four times during their stay. This is encouraging, Tom; and who knows but in time we may be able to "lay this family," and live without the terrors of their resurrection!

The Morrises are to dine with us, and I only trust that we shall not give them a "taste of our quality" in high living, for I have just caught sight of a fellow with a white cap going into Mrs. D.'s dressing-room, and the preparations are evidently considerable. Here 's Mary Anne saying she has something of consequence to impart to me, and so, for the present, farewell.

The murder is out, Tom, and all the mystery of Morris's missing letter made clear. Mrs. D. received it during my illness at Genoa, and finding it to be a proposal of marriage to Cary, took it upon her to write an indignant refusal.

Mary Anne has just confessed the whole to me in strict secrecy, frankly owning that she herself was the great culprit on the occasion, and that the terms of the reply were actually dictated by her. She said that her present avowal was made less in reparation for her misconduct — which she owned to be inexcusable — than as an obligation she felt under to requite the admirable behavior of Morris, who by this time must have surmised what had occurred, and whose gentlemanlike feeling recoiled from vindicating himself at the cost of family disunion and exposure.

I tell you frankly, Tom, that Mary Anne's own candor, the honest, straightforward way in which she told me the whole incident, amply repays me for all the annoyance it occasioned. Her conduct now assures me that, notwithstanding all the corrupting influences of our life abroad, the girl's generous nature has still survived, and may yet, with good care, be trained up to high deservings. Of course she enjoined me to secrecy; but even had she not done so, I 'd have respected her confidence. I am scarcely less pleased with Morris, whose delicacy is no bad guarantee for the future; so that for once, at least, my dear Tom, you find me in good humor with all the world, nor is it my own fault if I be not oftener so! You may smile, Tom, at my self-flattery; but I repeat it. All my philosophy of life has been to submit with a good grace, and make the best of everything, — to think as well of everybody as they would permit me to do; and when, as will happen, events went cross-grain, and all fell out "wrong," I was quite ready to "forget my own griefs, and be happy with *you*." And now to dinner, Tom, where I mean to drink your health!

It is all settled; though I have no doubt, after so many "false starts," you 'll still expect to hear a contradiction to this in my next letter; but you may believe me this time, Tom. Cary is to be married on Saturday; and that you may have stronger confidence in my words, I beg to assure you that I have not bestowed on her, as her marriage portion, either imaginary estates or mock domains. She is neither to be thought an Irish princess *en retraite*, nor to be the proud possessor of the "M'Carthy diamonds." In a word, Tom, we have contrived, by some good luck, to conduct the whole of this negotiation without involving ourselves in a labyrinth of lies, and the consequence has been a very wide-spread happiness and contentment.

Morris improves every hour on nearer acquaintance; and even Mrs. D. acknowledges that when "his shyness rubs off, he 'll be downright agreeable and amusing." Now, that same shyness is very little more than the constitutional coldness of *his* country, more palpable when contrasted with the over-warmth of *ours*. It *never does* rub off, Tom, which, unfortunately, our cordiality occasionally does; and hence the praise bestowed on the constancy of one country, and the censure on the changeability of the other. But this is no time for such dissertations, nor is my head in a condition to follow them out.

The house is beset with milliners, jewellers, and other seductionists of the same type; and Mrs. D.'s voice is loud in the drawing-room on the merits of Brussels lace and the becomingness of rubies. Even Cary appears to have yielded somewhat to the temptation of these vanities, and gives a passing glance at herself in the glass without any very marked disapproval. James is in ecstasies with Morris, who has confided all his horse arrangements to his especial care; and he sits in solemn conclave every morning with half a dozen stunted, knock-kneed bipeds, in earnest discussion of thorough-breds, weight-carriers, and fencers, and talks "Bell's Life" half the day afterwards.

But, above all, Mary Anne has pleased me throughout the whole transaction. Not a shadow of jealousy, not the faintest coloring of any unworthy rivalry has interfered with her sisterly affection, and her whole heart seems devoted to Cary's happiness. Handsome as she always was, the impulse of a high motive has elevated the character of her beauty, and rendered her perfectly lovely. So Belton would seem to think also, if I were only to pronounce from the mere expression of his face as he looks at her.

I must close this at once; there 's no use in my trying to journalize any longer, for events follow too fast for recording; besides, Tom, in the midst of all my happiness there comes a dash of sadness across me that I am so soon to part with one so dear to me! The first branch that drops from the tree tells the story of the decay at the trunk; and so it is as the chairs around your hearth become tenantless, you are led to think of the dark winter of old age, the long night before the longer journey! This is all selfishness, mayhap, and so no more of it. On Saturday the wedding, Tom; the Morrises start for Rome, and the Dodds for Ireland. Ay, my old friend, once more we shall meet, and if I know myself, not to part again till our passports are made out for a better place. And now, my dear friend, for the last time on foreign ground,

I am yours ever affectionately,

Kenny James Dodd.

Tell Mrs. Gallagher to have fires in all the rooms, and to see that Nelligan has a look to the roof where the rain used to come in. We must try and make the old house comfortable, and if we cannot have the blue sky without, we 'll at least endeavor to secure the means of an Irish welcome within doors.

I suppose it must be a part of that perversity that pertains to human nature in everything, but now that I have determined on going home again, I fancy I can detect a hundred advantages to be derived from foreign travel and foreign residence. You will, of course, meet me by saying, "What are your own experiences, Kenny Dodd? Do they serve to confirm this impression? Have you the evidences of such within the narrow circle of your own family?" No, Tom, I must freely own I have not. But I am, perhaps, able to say why it has been so, and even that same is something.

You can scarcely take up a number of the "Times" without reading of some newly arrived provincial in London being "done" by sharpers, through the devices of a very stale piece of roguery; his appearance, his dress, and his general air being the signs which have proclaimed him a fit subject for deception. So it is abroad; a certain class of travellers, the "Dodds" for instance, ramble about Switzerland and the Rhine country, John Murray in hand, speaking unintelligible French, and poking their noses everywhere. So long as they are migratory, they form the prey of innkeepers and the harvest of *laquais de place;* but when they settle and domesticate, they become the mark for ridicule for some, and for robbery from others. If they be wealthy, much is conceded to them for their money, — that is, their house will be frequented, their dinners eaten, their balls danced at; but as to any admission into "the society" of the place, they have no chance of it. Some Lord George of their acquaintance, cut by his equals, and shunned by his own set, will undertake to provide them guests; and so far as their own hospitalities extend, they will be "in the world," but not one jot further. The illustrious company that honors your *soirée* amuses itself with racy stories of your bad French, or flippant descriptions of your wife's "toilette;" nor is it enough that they ridicule these, but they will even make laughing matter of your homely notions of right and wrong, and scoff at what you know and feel to be the very best things in your nature. Your "noble friend," or somebody else's "noble friend," has said in public that you are "nobody;" and every marquis in his garret, and every count with half the income of your cook, despises as he dines with you. And you deserve it too; richly deserve it, I say. Had you come on the Continent to be abroad what you were well contented to be at home, — had you abstained from the mockery of a class you never belonged to, — had you settled down amidst those your equals in rank, and often much more than your equals in knowledge and acquirement, — your journey would not have been a series of disappointments. You would have seen much to delight and interest, and much to improve you. You would have educated your minds while richly enjoying yourselves; and while forming pleasant intimacies, and even friendships, widened the sphere of your sympathies with mankind, and assuredly have escaped no small share of the misfortunes and mishaps that befell the "Dodd Family Abroad."

THE END.

THAT BOY OF NORCOTT'S

TO

BARON EMILE ERLANGER.

My dear Erlanger, — Through the many anxieties which beset me while I was writing this story, your name was continually recurring, and always with some act of kindness, or some proof of affection. Let me, then, in simple gratitude dedicate to you a volume of which, in a measure, you stand sponsor, and say to the world at large what I have so often said to my own,

How sincerely and heartily I am

Your friend,

CHARLES LEVER.

Trieste, February 20th, 1869.

THAT BOY OF NORCOTT'S.

CHAPTER I.

THE TRIAL.

SOME years ago there was a trial in Dublin, which, partly because the parties in the cause were in a well-to-do condition of life, and partly because the case in some measure involved the interests of the two conflicting Churches, excited considerable sensation and much comment.

The contention was the right to the guardianship of a boy whose father and mother had ceased to live together. On their separation they had come to a sort of amicable arrangement that the child — then seven years old — should live alternate years with each; and though the mother's friends warmly urged her not to consent to a plan so full of danger to her child, and so certain to result in the worst effects on his character, the poor woman, whose rank in life was far inferior to her husband's, yielded, partly from habit of deference to his wishes, and more still because she believed, in refusing these terms, she might have found herself reduced to accept even worse ones. The marriage had been unfortunate in every way. Sir Roger Norcott had accompanied his regiment, the —th Dragoons, to Ireland, where some violent disturbances in the south had called for an increase of military force. When the riots had been suppressed, the troops, broken up into small detachments, were quartered through the counties, as opportunity and convenience served; Norcott's troop — for he was a captain

— being stationed in that very miserable and poverty-stricken town called Macroom. Here the dashing soldier, who for years had been a Guardsman, mixing in all the gayeties of a London life, passed days and weeks of dreary despondency. His two subs, who happened to be sons of men in trade, he treated with a cold and distant politeness, but never entered into their projects, nor accepted their companionship; and though they messed together each day, no other intimacy passed between them than the courtesies of the table.

It chanced that while thus hipped, and out of sorts, sick of the place and the service that had condemned him to it, he made acquaintance with a watchmaker, when paying for some slight service, and subsequently with his daughter, a very pretty, modest-looking, gentle girl of eighteen. The utter vacuity of his life, the tiresome hours of barrack-room solitude, the want of some one to talk to him, but, still more, of some one to listen, — for he liked to talk, and talked almost well, — led him to pass more than half his days and all his evenings at their house. Nor was the fact that his visits had become a sort of town scandal without its charm for a man who actually pined for a sensation, even though painful; and there was, too, an impertinence that, while declining the society of the supposed upper classes of the neighborhood, he found congenial companionship with these humble people, had a marvellous attraction for a man who had no small share of resentfulness in his nature, and was seldom so near being happy as when flouting some prejudice or outraging some popular opinion.

It had been his passion through life to be ever doing or saying something that no one could have anticipated. For the pleasure of astonishing the world, no sacrifice was too costly; and whether he rode, or shot, or played, or yachted, his first thought was notoriety. An ample fortune lent considerable aid to this tendency; but every year's extravagance was now telling on his resources, and he was forced to draw on his ingenuity where before he needed but to draw on his banker.

There was nothing that his friends thought less likely than that he would marry, except that, if he should, his wife would not be a woman of family: to bowl over both of these beliefs together, he married the watchmaker's daughter, and Mary Owen became a baronet's bride.

Perhaps — I 'm not very sure of even that — her marriage gave her one entire day of unbroken happiness, — I do not believe it gave her a week, and I know it did not a month. Whether it was that his friends were less shocked than he had hoped for, or that the shock wore out sooner, he was frantic at the failure of his grand coup, and immediately set about revenging on his unhappy wife all the disappointment she had caused him. After a series of cruelties — some of which savored of madness — but which she bore without complaint, or even murmur, he bethought him that her religious belief offered a groundwork for torment which he had hitherto neglected. He accordingly determined to make his profession to the Church of Rome, and to call on her to follow. This she stoutly refused; and he declared that they should separate. The menace had no longer a terror for her. She accepted whatever terms he was pleased to dictate; she only stipulated as to the child, and for him but to the extent we have already seen. The first year after the separation the boy passed with his father; the second he spent with his mother. At the end of the third year, when her turn again came round, Sir Roger refused to part with him; and when reminded of his promise, coarsely replied that his boy, above all things, must be "a gentleman," and that he was now arrived at an age when association with low and vulgar people would attach a tone to his mind and a fashion to his thoughts that all the education in the world would not eradicate; and that rather than yield to such a desecration, he would litigate the matter to the last shilling of his estate. Such was the cause before the Barons of the Exchequer: the mother pleading that her child should be restored to her; the father opposing the demand that the mother's habits and associates were not in accordance with the prospects of one who should inherit title and fortune; and, last of all, that the boy was devotedly attached to him, and bore scarcely a trace of affection for his mother.

So painful were the disclosures that came out during the trial, so subversive of every feeling that pertains to the sanctity of the family, and so certain to work injuriously on the character of the child whose interests were at stake, that the judge made more than one attempt to arrest the proceedings and refer the case to arbitration, but Sir Roger would not agree to this. He was once more in his element, he was before the world, — the newspapers were full of him, and, better than all, in attack and reprobation. He had demanded to be put on the table as a witness, and they who saw, it is said, never forgot the insolent defiance of public opinion that he on that day displayed; how boldly he paraded opinions in opposition to every sense of right and justice, and how openly he avowed his principle of education to be — to strip off from youth every delusion as to the existence of truth and honor in life, and to teach a child, from his earliest years, that trickery and falsehood were the daily weapons of mankind, and that he who would not consent to be the dupe of his fellow-men must be their despot and their persecutor. If he had the satisfaction of outraging the feelings of all in court, and insulting every sense of propriety and decorum, he paid heavily for the brief triumph. The judge delivered a most stern denunciation of his doctrines, and declared that no case had ever come before the court where so little hesitation existed as to the judgment to be pronounced. The sentence was that, up to the age of twelve, the child was to be confided to the mother's charge; after which period the court would, on application, deliberate and determine on the future guardianship.

"Will you leave me, Digby?" asked the father; and his lips trembled, and his cheek blanched as he uttered the words. The boy sprang into his arms, and kissed him wildly and passionately; and the two clung to each other in close embrace, and their mingled sobs echoed through the now silent court. "You see, my Lord, you see —" cried the father; but the boy's struggles were choking him, and, with his own emotions, would not suffer him to continue. His sufferings were now real, and a murmur ran through the court that showed how public feeling was trembling in the balance. The bustle of a new cause that was coming on soon closed the scene. The child was handed over to an officer of the court, while the mother's friends concerted together, and all was over.

Over as regarded the first act of a life-long drama; and ere the curtain rises, it only remains to say that the cause which that day decided was mine, and that I, who write this, was the boy "Digby Norcott."

CHAPTER II.

WITH MY MOTHER.

My mother lived in a little cottage at a place called the Green Lanes, about three miles from Dublin. The name was happily given, for on every side there were narrow roads overshadowed by leafy trees, which met above and gave only glimpses of sky and cloud through their feathery foliage. The close hedgerows of white or pink thorn limited the view on either side, and imparted a something of gloom to a spot whose silence was rarely broken, for it was not a rich man's neighborhood. They who frequented it were persons of small fortune, retired subalterns in the army, or clerks in public offices, and such like petty respectabilities who preferred to herd together, and make no contrasts of their humble means with larger, greater incomes.

Amongst the sensations I shall never forget — and which, while I write, are as fresh as the moment I first felt them — were my feelings when the car stopped opposite a low wicket, and Mr. McBride, the attorney, helped me down and said, "This is your home, Digby; your mother lives here." The next moment a pale but very handsome young woman came rushing down the little path and clasped me in her arms. She had dropped on her knees to bring her face to mine, and she kissed me madly and wildly, so that my cap fell off. "See how my frill is all rumpled," said I, unused as I was to such disconcerting warmth, and caring far more for my smart appearance than for demonstrations of affection. "Oh, darling, never mind it," sobbed she. "You shall have another and a nicer. I will make it myself, for my own boy, — for you are mine, Digby. You are mine, dearest, ain't you?"

"I am papa's boy," said I, doggedly.

"But you will love mamma too, Digby, won't you? — poor mamma, that has no one to love her, or care for her if you do not; and who will so love you in return, and do everything for you, — everything to make you happy, — happy and good, Digby."

"Then let us go back to Earls Court. It's far prettier than this, and there are great lions over the gateway, and wide steps up to the door. I don't like this. It looks so dark and dreary, — it makes me cry." And to prove it, I burst out into a full torrent of weeping, and my mother hung over me and sobbed too; and long after the car had driven away, we sat there on the grass weeping bitterly together, though there was no concert in our sorrow, nor any soul to our grief.

That whole afternoon was passed in attempts to comfort and caress me by my mother, and in petulant demands on my part for this or that luxury I had left behind me. I wanted my nice bed with the pink curtains, and my little tool-case. I wanted my little punt, my pony, my fishing-rod. I wanted the obsequious servants, who ran at my bidding, and whose respectful manner was a homage I loved to exact. Not one of these was forthcoming, and how could I believe her who soothingly told me that her love would replace them, and that her heart's affection would soon be dearer to me than all my toys and all the glittering presents that littered my room? "But I want my pony," I cried; "I want my little dog Fan, and I want to sit beside papa, and see him drive four horses, and he lets me whip them too, and *you* won't." And so I cried hysterically again, and in these fretful paroxysms I passed my evening.

The first week of my life there was to me — it still is to me — like a dream, — a sad, monotonous dream. Repulsed in every form, my mother still persisted in trying to amuse or interest me, and I either sat in moody silence, refusing all attention, or went off into passionate grief, sobbing as if my heart would break. "Let him cry his fill," said old Biddy the maid, — "let him cry his fill, and it will do him good." And I could have killed her on the spot as she said it.

If Biddy Cassidy really opined that a hearty fit of crying would have been a good alterative for me, she ought not to have expressed the opinion in my presence, for there was that much of my father in me that quickly suggested resistance, and I at once resolved that, no matter what it might cost me, or by what other means I might find a vent for my grief, I 'd cry no more. All my poor mother's caresses, all her tenderness, and all her watchful care never acted on my character with half the force or one-tenth of the rapidity that did this old hag's attempt to thwart and oppose me. Her system was, by a continual comparison between my present life and my past, to show how much better off I was now than in my former high estate, and by a travesty of all I had been used to, to pretend that anything like complaint from me would be sheer ingratitude. "Here's the pony, darlin', waitin' for you to ride him," she would say, as she would lay an old walking-stick beside my door; and though the blood would rush to my head at the insult, and something very nigh choking rise to my throat, I would master my passion and make no reply. This demeanor was set down to sulkiness, and Biddy warmly entreated my mother to suppress the temper it indicated, and, as she mildly suggested, "cut it out of me when I was young" — a counsel, I must own, she did not follow.

Too straitened in her means to keep a governess for me, and unwilling to send me to a school, my mother became my teacher herself; and, not having had any but the very commonest education, she was obliged to acquire in advance what she desired to impart. Many a night would she pore over the Latin Grammar, that she might be even one stage before *me* in the morning. Over and over did she get up the bit of geography that was to test my knowledge the next day; and in this way, while leading *me* on, she acquired, almost without being aware of it, a considerable amount of information. Her faculties were above the common, and her zeal could not be surpassed; so that, while I was stumbling and blundering over "Swaine's Sentences," she had read all Sallust's "Catiline," and most of the "Odes" of Horace; and long before I had mastered my German declensions, she was reading "Grimm's Stories" and Auerbach's "Village Sketches." Year after year went over quietly, uneventfully. I had long ceased to remember my former life of splendor, or, if it recurred to me, it came with no more of reality than the events of a dream. One day, indeed, — I shall never forget it, — the past revealed itself before me with the vivid distinctness of a picture, and, I shame to say, rendered me unhappy and discontented for several days after. I was returning one afternoon from a favorite haunt, where I used to spend hours, — the old churchyard of Killester, a long-unused cemetery, with a ruined church beside it, — when four spanking chestnuts came to the foot of the little rise on which the ruin stood, and the servants, jumping down, undid the bearing-reins, to breathe the cattle up the ascent. It was my father was on the box; and as he skilfully brushed the flies from his horses with his whip, gently soothing the hot-mettled creatures with his voice, I bethought me of the proud time when I sat beside him, and when he talked to me of the different tempers of each horse in the team, instilling into me that interest and that love for them, as thinking sentient creatures, which gives the horse a distinct character to all who have learned thus to think of him from childhood. He never looked at me as he passed. How should he recognize the little boy in the gray linen blouse he was wont to see in black velvet with silver buttons? Perhaps I was not sorry he did not know me. Perhaps I felt it easier to fight my own shame alone than if it had been confessed and witnessed. At all events, the sight sent me home sad and depressed, no longer able to take pleasure in my usual pursuits, and turning from my toys and books with actual aversion.

Remembering how all mention of my father used to affect my mother long ago, seeing how painfully his mere name acted upon her, I forbore to speak of this incident, and buried it in my heart, to think and ruminate over when alone.

Time went on and on till I wanted but a few months of twelve, and my lessons were all but dropped, as my mother's mornings were passed either in letter-writing or in interviews with her lawyer. It was on the conclusion of one of these councils that Mr. McBride led me into the garden, and, seating me beside him on a bench, said, "I have something to say to you, Digby; and I don't know that I 'd venture to say it, if I had not seen that you are a thoughtful boy, and an affectionate son of the best mother that ever lived. You are old enough, besides, to have a right to know something about yourself and your future prospects, and it is for that I have come out to-day." And with this brief preface he told me the whole story of my father's and mother's marriage and separation; and how it came to pass that I had been taken from one to live with the other; and how the time was now drawing nigh — it wanted but two months and ten days — when I should be once more under my father's guidance, and totally removed from the influence of that mother who loved me so dearly.

"We might fight the matter in the courts, it is true," said he. "There are circumstances which might weigh with a judge whether he 'd remove you from a position of safety and advantage to one of danger and difficulty; but it would be the fight of a weak purse against a strong one, not to say that it would also be the struggle of a poor mother's heart against the law of the land; and I have at last persuaded her it would be wiser and safer not to embitter the relations with your father, — to submit to the inevitable; and not improbably you may be permitted to see her from time to time, and, at all events, to write to her." It took a long time for him to go through what I have so briefly set down here; for there were many pros and cons, and he omitted none of them; and while he studiously abstained from applying to my father any expression of censure or reprobation, he could not conceal from me that he regarded him as a very cold-hearted, unfeeling man, from whom little kindness could be expected, and to whom entreaty or petition would be lost time. I will not dwell on the impression this revelation produced on me, nor will I linger on the time that followed on it, — the very saddest of my life. Our lessons were stopped, — all the occupations that once filled the day ceased, — a mournful silence fell upon us, as though there was a death in the house; and there was, indeed, the death of that peaceful existence in which we had glided along for years, and we sat grieving over a time that was to return no more. My mother tried to employ herself in setting my clothes in order, getting my books decently bound, and enabling me in every way to make a respectable appearance in that new life I was about to enter on; but her grief usually overcame her in these attempts, and she would hang in tears over the little trunk that recalled every memory she was so soon to regard as the last traces of her child. Biddy, who had long, for years back, ceased to torment or annoy me, came back with an arrear of bitterness to her mockeries and sneers. "I was going to be a lord, and I'd not know the mother that nursed me if I saw her in the street! Fine clothes and fine tratement was more to me than love and affection; signs on it, I was turning my back on my own mother, and going to live with the blackguard" — she did n't mince the word — "that left her to starve." These neatly turned compliments met me at every moment, and by good fortune served to arm me with a sort of indignant courage that carried me well through all my perils.

To spare my poor mother the pain of parting, Mr. McBride — I cannot say how judiciously — contrived that I should be taken out for a drive and put on board the packet bound for Holyhead, under the charge of a courier, whom my father had sent to fetch me, to Brussels, where he was then living. Of how I left Ireland, and journeyed on afterwards, I know nothing; it was all confusion and turmoil. The frequent changes from place to place, the noise, the new people, the intense haste that seemed to pervade all that went on, addled me to that degree that I had few collected thoughts at the time, and no memory of them afterwards.

From certain droppings of the courier, however, and his heartily expressed joy as Brussels came in sight, I gathered that I had been a very troublesome charge, and refractory to the very limit of actual rebellion.

CHAPTER III.

WITH MY FATHER.

At the time I speak of, my father dwelt in a villa near Brussels, which had been built by or for Madame Malibran. It was a strange though somewhat incongruous edifice, and more resembled a public building than a private gentleman's residence. It stood in a vast garden, or rather park, where fruit and forest trees abounded, and patches of flowers came suddenly into view in most unexpected places. There were carriage drives, too, so ingeniously managed that the visitor could be led to believe the space ten times greater than it was in reality. The whole inside and out savored strongly of the theatre, and every device of good or bad taste — the latter largely predominating — had its inspiration in the stage.

As we drove under the arched entrance gate, over which a crowned leopard — the Norcott crest — was proudly rampant, I felt a strange throb at my heart that proved the old leaven was still alive within me, and that the feeling of being the son of a man of rank and fortune had a strong root in my heart.

From the deep reverence of the gorgeous porter, who wore an embroidered leather belt over his shoulder, to the trim propriety and order of the noiseless avenue, all bespoke an amount of state and grandeur that appealed very powerfully to me, and I can still recall how the bronze lamps that served to light the approach struck me as something wonderfully fine, as the morning's sun glanced on their crested tops.

The carriage drew up at the foot of a large flight of marble steps, which led to a terrace covered by a long veranda.

Under the shade of this two gentlemen sat at breakfast, both unknown to me. "Whom have we here?" cried the elder, a fat, middle-aged man of coarse features and stern expression, — "whom have we here?"

The younger — conspicuous by a dressing-gown and cap that glittered with gold embroidery — looked lazily over the top of his newspaper, and said, "That boy of Norcott's, I take it; he was to arrive to-day."

This was the first time I heard an expression that my ears were soon to be well familiar to, and I cannot tell how bitterly the words insulted me. "Who were they," I asked myself, "who, under my father's roof, could dare so to call me! and why was I not styled Sir Roger Norcott's son, and not thus disparagingly, 'that boy of Norcott's'?"

I walked slowly up the steps among these men as defiantly as though there was a declared enmity between us, and was proceeding straight towards the door, when the elder called out, "Holloa, youngster, come here and report yourself! You 've just come, have n't you?"

"I have just come," said I, slowly; "but when I report myself it shall be to my father, Sir Roger Norcott."

"You got that, Hotham, and I must say you deserved it too," said the younger in a low tone, which my quick hearing, however, caught.

"Will you have some breakfast with us?" said the elder, with a faint laugh, as though he enjoyed the encounter.

"No, I thank you, sir," said I, stiffly, and passed on into the house.

"Master Digby," said a smart little man in black, who for a moment or two puzzled me whether he was a guest or a servant, "may I show you to your room, sir? Sir Roger is not up; he seldom rings for his bath before one o'clock; but he said he would have it earlier to-day."

"And what is your name, pray?"

"Nixon, sir. Mr. Nixon, Sir Roger is pleased to call me for distinction' sake; the lower servants require it."

"Tell me then, Mr. Nixon, who are the two gentlemen I saw at breakfast outside?"

"The stoutish gentleman, sir, is Captain Hotham, of the Royal Navy; the other, with the Turkish pipe, is Mr. Cleremont, Secretary to the Legation here. Great friends of Sir Roger's, sir. Dine here three or four times a week, and have their rooms always kept for them."

The appearance of my room, into which Nixon now ushered me, went far to restore me to a condition of satisfaction. It was the most perfect little bedroom it is possible to imagine, and Nixon never wearied in doing the honors of displaying it.

"Here 's your library, sir. You 've only to slide this mirror into the wall; and here are all your books. This press is your armory. Sir Roger gave the order himself for that breech-loader at Liège. This small closet has your bath, — always ready, as you see, sir, — hot and cold; and that knob yonder commands the shower-bath. It smells fresh of paint here just now, sir, for it was only finished on Saturday; and the men are coming to-day to fix a small iron staircase from your balcony down to the garden. Sir Roger said he was sure you would like it."

I was silent for a moment, — a moment of exquisite revery, — and then I asked if there were always people visitors at the Villa.

"I may say, sir, indeed, next to always. We have n't dined alone since March last."

"How many usually come to dinner?"

"Five or seven, sir; always an odd number. Seldom more than seven, and never above eleven, except a state dinner to some great swell going through."

"No ladies, of course?"

"Pardon me, sir. The Countess Vander Neeve dined here yesterday; Madam Van Straaten, and Mrs. Cleremont — Excuse me, sir, there 's Sir Roger's bell. I must go and tell him you 've arrived."

When Nixon left me, I sat for full twenty minutes, like one walking out of a trance, and asking myself how much was real, and how much fiction, of all around me?

My eyes wandered over the room, and from the beautiful little Gothic clock on the mantelpiece to the gilded pineapple from which my bed-curtains descended, — everything seemed of matchless beauty to me. Could I ever weary of admiring them? Would they seem to me every morning as I awoke as tasteful and as elegant as now they appeared to me? Oh, if dear mamma could but see them! If she but knew with what honor I was received, would not the thought go far to assuage the grief our separation cost her? And, last of all, came the thought, if she herself were here to live with me, to read with me, to be my companion as she used to be, — could life offer anything to compare with such happiness? And why should not this be? If papa really should love me, why might I not lead him to see to whom I owed all that made me worthy of his love?

"Breakfast is served, sir, in the small breakfast-room," said a servant, respectfully.

"You must show me where that is," said I, rising to follow him.

And now we walked along a spacious corridor, and descended a splendid stair of white marble, with gilded banisters, and across an octagon hall, with a pyramid of flowering plants in the centre, and into a large gallery with armor on the walls, that I wished greatly to linger over and examine, and then into a billiard-room, and at last into the small breakfast-parlor, where a little table was laid out, and another servant stood in readiness to serve me.

"Mr. Eccles, sir, will be down in a moment, if you 'll be pleased to wait for him," said the man.

"And who is Mr. Eccles?" asked I.

"The gentleman as is to be your tutor, sir, I believe," replied he, timidly; "and he said perhaps you 'd make the tea, sir."

"All right," said I, opening the caddy, and proceeding to make myself at home at once. "What is here?"

"Devilled kidneys, sir; and this is fried mackerel. Mr. Eccles takes oysters; but he won't have them opened till he 's down. Here he is, sir."

The door was now flung open, and a good-looking young man, with a glass stuck in one eye, entered, and with a cheery but somewhat affected voice, called out, —

"Glad to see you, Digby, my boy; hope I have not starved you out waiting for me?"

"I 'm very hungry, sir, but not quite starved out," said I, half amazed at the style of man selected to be my guide, and whose age at most could not be above three or four and twenty.

"You have n't seen your father yet, of course, nor won't these two hours. Yes, Gilbert, let us have the oysters. I always begin with oysters and a glass of sauterne; and, let me tell you, your father's sauterne is excellent. Not that I counsel *you*, however, to start with wine at breakfast. I have n't told you that I 'm to be your tutor," said he, filling his glass; "and here 's to our future fellowship."

I smiled and sipped my tea to acknowledge the toast, and he went on, —

"You must n't be afraid that I 'll lean too heavily on you, Digby, — at least, at first. My system is, never make education a punishment. There 's nothing that a gentleman — mind, I say a gentleman — ought to know that he cannot acquire as easily and as pleasantly as he does field-sports. If a man has to live by his wits, he must drudge; there 's no help for it. And — But here come the oysters. Ain't they magnificent? Let me give you one piece of instruction while the occasion serves; let no one ever persuade you that Colchester oysters equal the Ostend. They have neither the plumpness nor the juiciness, and still less have they that fresh odor of the sea that gives such zest to appetite. One of these days I shall ask you what Horace says of oysters, and where. You never heard of Horace, eh?"

"Yes, sir; I was reading the 'Odes' when I came away."

"And with whom, pray?"

"With mamma, sir."

"And do you mean to say mamma knew Latin?"

"Yes, sir; she learned it to teach me. She worked far harder than I did, and I could never come up with her."

"Ah, yes, I see; but all that sort of learning — that irregular study — is a thing to be grubbed up. If I were to be frank with you, Digby, I 'd say I 'd rather have you in total ignorance than with that smattering of knowledge a mamma's teaching is sure to imply. What had you read before Horace?"

"'Cæsar's Commentaries,' sir, an 'Æneid' of Virgil, two plays of Terence —"

"Any Greek? — anything of Euripedes or Aristophanes, eh?" asked he, mockingly.

"No, sir; we were to begin the New Testament after the holidays; for I had just gone over the grammar twice."

With mamma, of course?"

"Yes, sir."

He helped himself to a cutlet, and as he poured the Harvey's sauce over it, it was plain to see that he was not thinking of what was before him, but employed in another and different direction. After a considerable pause he turned his eyes full upon me, and with a tone of far more serious import than he had yet used, said, "We 're not very long acquainted, Digby; but I have a trick of reading people through their faces, and I feel I can trust you." He waited for some remark from me, but I made none, and he went on: "With an ordinary boy of your age, — indeed, I might go farther, and say with any other boy — I 'd not venture on the confidence I am now about to make; but a certain instinct tells me I run no danger in trusting *you.*"

"Is it a secret, sir?"

"Well, in one sense it *is* a secret; but why do you ask?"

"Because mamma told me to avoid secrets; to have none of my own, and know as little as I could of other people's."

"An excellent rule in general, but there are cases where it will not apply: this is one of them, for here the secret touches your own family. You are aware that papa and mamma do not live together? Don't flush up, Digby; I 'm not going to say one word that could hurt you. It is for your benefit — I might say for your absolute safety — that I speak now. Your father has one of the noblest natures a man ever possessed; he is a prince in generosity, and the very soul of honor, and, except pride, I don't believe he has a fault. This same pride, however, leads him to fancy he can never do wrong; indeed, he does not admit that he ever made a mistake in his life, and, consequently, he does not readily forgive those to whom he imputes any disasters that befall him. Your mother's family are included in this condemned list, — I can't exactly say why; and for the same reason, or no reason, your mother herself. You must, therefore, take especial care that you never speak of one of these people."

"And mamma?"

"*Her* name least of all. There may come a time — indeed, it is sure to come — when this difficulty can be got over; but any imprudence now — the smallest mistake — would destroy this chance. Of course it 's very hard on you, my poor fellow, to be debarred from the very theme you 'd like best to dwell on; but when you know the danger — not merely danger, but the positive certainty of mischief — a chance word might bring about, I read you very ill, or you 'll profit by my warning."

I bent my head to mean assent, but I could not speak.

"Papa will question you whether you have been to school, and what books you are reading, and your answer will be, 'Never at school; had all my lessons at home.' Not a word more, mind that, Digby. Say it now after me, that I may see if you can be exact to a syllable."

I repeated the words correctly, and he patted me affectionately on the shoulder, and said, —

"You and I are sure to get on well together. When I meet with a boy, who, besides being intelligent, is a born gentleman, I never hesitate about treating him as my equal, save in that knowledge of life I 'm quite ready to share with him. I don't want to be a Pope with my pupil, and say, 'You are not to do this, or think that,' and give no reason why. You 'll always find me ready to discuss with you, and talk over anything that puzzles you. I was not treated in that fashion myself, and I know well what the repressive system has cost me. You follow me, don't you, in what I say?"

"Yes, sir; I think I understand it all."

Whether I looked as if my words had more meaning than they expressed, or that some sort of misgiving was working within him that he had been hasty in his confidence, I know not; but he arose suddenly, and said, "I must go and get a cigarette." And with that he left me.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VILLA MALIBRAN.

For some hours I wandered over the house, admiring the pictures and the bronzes and the statuettes, and the hundreds of odd knick-knacks of taste or curiosity that filled the *salons*. The treasures of art were all new to me, and I thought I could never weary of gazing on some grand landscape by Both, or one of those little interiors of Dutch life by Ostade or Mieris. It seemed to me the very summit of luxury, that all these glorious objects should be there, awaiting as it were the eye of him who owned them, patient slaves of his pleasure, to be rewarded by, perhaps, a hurried glance as he passed. The tempered light, the noiseless footsteps, as one trod the triple-piled carpet, the odor of rich flowers everywhere, imparted a dreaminess to the sense of enjoyment that, after long, long years, I can recall and almost revive by an effort of memory.

I met no one as I loitered through the rooms, for I was in a part of the house only opened on great occasions or for large receptions; and so I strayed on, lost in wonderment at the extent and splendor of a scene which, to my untutored senses, seemed of an actually royal magnificence. Having reached what I believed to be the limit of the suite of rooms, I was about to retrace my steps, when I saw that a small octagon tower opened from an angle of the room, though no apparent doorway led into it. This puzzle interested me at once, and I set about to resolve it, if I might. I opened one of the windows to inspect the tower on the outside, and saw that no stairs led up to it, nor any apparent communication existed with the rest of the house. I bethought me of the sliding mirror which in my own room concealed the bookcase, and set to work to see if some similar contrivance had not been employed here; but I searched in vain. Defeated and disappointed, I was turning away when, passing my hand along the margin of a massive picture-frame, I touched a small button; and as I did so, with a faint sound like a wail, the picture moved slowly, like an opening door, and disclosed the interior of the tower. I entered at once, my curiosity now raised to a point of intensity to know what had been so carefully and cunningly guarded from public view. What a blank disappointment was mine! The little room, about nine or ten feet in diameter, contained but a few straw-bottomed chairs, and a painted table on which a tea-service of common blue-ware stood. A Dutch clock was on a bracket at one side of the window, and a stuffed bird — a grouse, I believe — occupied another. A straight-backed old sofa, covered with a vulgar chintz, stood against the wall; an open book, with a broken fan in the leaves, to mark the place, lay on the sofa. The book was "Paul and Virginia. A common sheet almanac was nailed against the wall, but over the printed columns of the months a piece of white paper was pasted, on which, in large letters, was written "June 11, 18—. Dies infausta." I started. I had read that date once before in my mother's prayer-book, and had learned it was her marriage-day. As a ray of sunlight displays in an instant every object within its beam, I at once saw the meaning of every detail around me. These were the humble accessories of that modest home from which my dear mother was taken; these were the grim reminders of the time my father desired to perpetuate as an undying sorrow. I trembled to think what a nature I should soon be confronted with, and how terrible must be the temper of a man whose resentments asked for such aliment to maintain them! I stole away abashed at my own intrusiveness, and feeling that I was rightfully punished by the misery that overwhelmed me. How differently now did all the splendor appear to me as I retraced my steps! how defiantly I gazed on that magnificence which seemed to insult the poverty I had just quitted!

What a contrast to the nurtured spitefulness of his conduct was my poor mother's careful preservation of a picture representing my father in his uniform. A badly painted thing it was; but with enough of likeness to recall him. And as such, in defiance of neglect and ill-usage and insult, she preserved it, — a memorial, not of happier days, but of a time when she dreamed of happiness to come. While I was thus thinking, seeking in my mind comparisons between them, which certainly redounded but little to his credit, Nixon came up to me, saying, "Oh, Master Digby, we 've been looking for you in every direction. Sir Roger has asked over and over why you have not been to see him; and I 'm afraid you 'll find him displeased at your delay."

"I 'm ready now," said I, drily, and followed him.

My father was in his study, lying on a sofa, and cutting the leaves of a new book as I entered; and he did not interrupt the operation to offer me his hand.

"So, sir," said he, calmly and coldly, "you have taken your time to present yourself to me? Apparently you preferred making acquaintance with the house and the grounds."

"I am very sorry, sir," I began; "but I did not know you had risen. Nixon told me about one or two — "

"Indeed! I was not aware that you and Mr. Nixon had been discussing my habits. Come nearer; nearer still. What sort of dress is this? Is it a smock-frock you have on?"

"No, sir. It 's a blouse to keep my jacket clean. I have got but one."

"And these shoes; are they of your own making?"

"No, sir. I could n't make even as good as these."

"You are a very poor-looking object, I must say. What was Antoine about that he did n't, at least, make you look like a gentleman, eh? Can you answer me that?"

"No, sir, I cannot."

"Nor I, either," said he, sighing. "Have you been equally neglected inside as out? Have you learned to read?"

"Yes, sir."

"And to write?"

"Yes, sir."

"Write my name, then, there, on that piece of paper, and let me see it."

I drew nigh, and wrote in a full, bold hand, Roger Norcott.

"Why not Sir Roger Norcott, boy? Why not give me my name and title too?"

"You said your name, sir, and I thought —"

"No matter what you thought. This literalism comes of home breeding," muttered he to himself; "they are made truthful at the price of being vulgar. What do you know besides reading and writing?"

"A little Latin, sir, and some French, and some German, and three books of Euclid, and the Greek grammar —"

"There, there, that's more than enough. It will tax your tutor's ingenuity to stub up all this rubbish, and prepare the soil for real acquirement. I was hoping I should see you a savage: a fresh, strong-natured impulsive savage! What I'm to do with you, with your little peddling knowledge of a score of things, I can't imagine. I'd swear you can neither ride, row, nor fence, never handled a cricket-ball or a single-stick?"

"Quite true, sir; but I'd like to do every one of them."

"Of course you have been taught music?"

"Yes, sir; the piano, and a little singing."

"That completes it," cried he, flinging his book from him. "They've been preparing you for a travelling circus, while I wanted to make you a gentleman. Mind me now, sir, and don't expect that I ever repeat my orders to any one. What I say once I mean to be observed. Let your past life be entirely forgotten by you, — a thing that had no reality; begin from this day — from this very room — a new existence, which is to have neither link nor tie to what has gone before it. The persons you will see here, their ways, their manners, their tone, will be examples for your imitation; copy them, not servilely nor indiscriminately, but as you will find how their traits will blend with your own nature. Never tell an untruth, never accept an insult without redress, be slow about forming friendships, and where you hate, hate thoroughly. That's enough for the present. Ask Mr. Eccles to have the kindness to take you to his tailor and order some clothes. You must dine alone till you are suitably dressed. After that you shall come to my table. One thing more and you may go: don't ever approach me with tales or complaints of any one; right yourself where you can, and where you cannot, bear your grievance silently. You can change nothing, alter nothing, here; you are a guest, but a guest over whom I exercise full control. If you please me, it will be well for you; if not, you understand — it will cost me little to tell you so. Go. Go now." He motioned me to leave him, and I went. Straight to my room I went, and sat down at once to write it all to mother. My heart swelled with indignation at the way I had been received, and a hundred times over did I say to myself that there was no poverty, no hardship I would not face rather than buy a life of splendor on such ignominious terms. Oh, if I could but get back again to the little home I had quitted, how I would bless the hour that restored me to peace of mind and self-respect! As I wrote, my indignation warmed with every line. I found that my passion was actually mastering my reason. Better to finish this, later on, — when I shall be cooler, thought I; and I walked to my window and opened it. There were voices of people speaking in the paddock below, and I leaned over the balcony and saw the two men I had seen at breakfast, seated on rustic chairs, watching a young horse being broken to the saddle. The well-worn ring in the grass showed that this spot was reserved for such purposes, nor was I displeased to know that such a source of interest lay so near to me.

"Is n't he one of your Mexicans, George?" asked Captain Hotham.

"No, sir, he's a Hungarian-bred 'un. Master calls him a Jucker, whatever that is."

"Plenty of action, anyhow."

"A little too much, sir; that's his fault. He's a-comin' now, and it's all they can do to keep him going over the park paling. Take this one back," said he to the groom, who was ringing a heavy-shouldered, ungainly colt in the ring.

"You'll not gain much credit by that animal, George," said Cleremont, as he lighted a cigar.

"He ain't a beauty, sir; he's low before, and he's cow-hocked behind; but Sir Roger says he's the best blood in

Norfolk. Take care, take care, sir! the skittish devil never knows where he'll send his hind-legs. Steady, Tom, don't check him: why, he's sweating as if he had been round the two-mile course."

The animal that called for this criticism was a dark chestnut, but so bathed in sweat as to appear almost black. He was one of those cross breeds between the Arab and the western blood, that gain all the beauty of head and crest and straightly formed croup, and yet have length of body and depth of rib denied to the pure Arab. To my thinking he was the most perfect creature I had ever seen, and as he bounded and plunged, there was a supple grace and pliancy about him indescribably beautiful.

George now unloosened the long reins which were attached to the heavy surcingle, and after walking the animal two or three times round the circle, suffered him to go free. As if astonished at his liberty, the young creature stood still for a minute or two, and sniffed the air, and then gave one wild bound and headlong plunge, as though he were going straight into the earth; after which he looked timidly about him, and then walked slowly along in the track worn by the others.

"He's far quieter than the last time I saw him," said Hotham.

"He's gettin' more sense every day, sir," replied George; "he don't scratch his head with his hind-leg now, sir, and he don't throw hisself down neither."

"He has n't given up biting, I see," said Cleremont.

"No, sir; and they tell me them breed never does; but it's only play, sir."

"I'll give you six months before you can call him fit to ride, George."

"My name ain't Spunner, sir, if the young gent as come yesterday don't back him in six weeks' time."

"And is it for the boy Norcott intends him?" asked Cleremont of Hotham.

"So he told me yesterday; and though I warned him that he had n't another boy if that fellow should come to grief, he only said, 'If he's got *my* blood in him, he'll keep his saddle; and if he has n't, he had better make room for another.'"

"Ain't he a-going beautiful now?" cried George, as the animal swung slowly along at a gentle trot, every step of which was as measured as clockwork.

"You 'll have to teach the youngster also, George," said Hotham. "I 'm sure he never backed a horse in his life."

"Nay, sir, he rode very pretty indeed when he was six years old. I did n't put him on a Shelty, or one of the hard-mouthed 'uns, but a nice little lively French mare, that reared up the moment he bore hard on her bit; so that he learned to sit on his beast without holdin' on by the bridle."

"He 's a loutish boy," said Cleremont to the Captain. "I 'll wager what you like they 'll not make a horseman of him."

"Eccles says he 's a confounded pedant," said the other; "that he wanted to cap Horace with him at breakfast."

"Poor Bob! that was n't exactly his line; but he 'd hold his own in Balzac or Fred Soulié."

"Oh, now I see what Norcott was driving at when he said, 'I wanted the stuff to make a gentleman, and they 've sent me the germ of a school-usher.' I said, 'Send him to sea with me. I shall be afloat in March, and I 'll take him.'"

"Well, what answer did he make you?"

"It was n't a civil one," said the other, gruffly. "He said, 'You misapprehend me, Hotham. A sea-captain is only a boatswain in epaulettes. I mean the boy to be a gentleman.'"

"And you bore that?"

"Yes. Just as well as you bore his telling you at dinner on Sunday last that a Legation secretary was a cross between an old lady and a clerk in the Customs."

"A man who scatters impertinences broadcast is only known for the merits of his cook or his cellar."

"Both of which are excellent."

"Shall I send him in, sir?" asked George, as he patted the young horse and caressed him.

"Well, Eccles," cried Hotham, as the tutor lounged lazily up, "what do you say to the mount they 're going to put your pupil on?"

"I wish they'd wait a bit. I shall not be ready for orders till next spring, and I'd rather they'd not break his neck before February or March."

"Has Norcott promised you the presentation, Bob?"

"No. He can't make up his mind whether he'll give it to me or to a Plymouth Brother, or to that fellow that was taken up at Salford for blasphemy, and who happens to be in full orders."

"With all his enmity to the Established Church, I think he might be satisfied with you," said Cleremont.

"Very neat, and very polite too," said Eccles; "but that this is the Palace of Truth, I might feel nettled."

"Is it, by Jove?" cried Hotham. "Then it must be in the summer months, when the house is shut up. Who has got a strong cigar? These Cubans of Norcott's have no flavor. It must be close on luncheon-time."

"I can't join you, for I've to go into town, and get my young bear trimmed, and his nails cut. 'Make him presentable,' Norcott said, and I've had easier tasks to do."

So saying, Eccles moved off in one direction, while Hotham and Cleremont strolled away in another; and I was left to my own reflections, which were not few.

CHAPTER V.

A FIRST DINNER-PARTY.

I WAS made "presentable" in due time, and on the fifth day after my arrival made my appearance at the dinner-table. "Sit there, sir," said my father, "opposite me." And I was not sorry to perceive that an enormous vase with flowers effectually screened me from his sight. The post of honor thus accorded me was a sufficient intimation to my father's guests how he intended me to be treated by them; and as they were without an exception all hangers-on and dependants, — men who dined badly or not at all when uninvited to his table, — they were marvellously quick in understanding that I was to be accepted as his heir, and, after himself, the person of most consideration there.

Besides the three individuals I have already mentioned, our party included two foreigners, — Baron Steinmetz, an aide-de-camp of the King, and an Italian duke, San Giovanni. The Duke sat on my father's right, the Baron on mine. The conversation during dinner was in French, which I followed imperfectly, and was considerably relieved on discovering that the German spoke French with difficulty, and blundered over his genders as hopelessly as I should have done had I attempted to talk. "Ach Gott," muttered he to himself in German, "when people were seeking for a common language, why did n't they take one that all humanity could pronounce?"

"So meine ich auch, Herr Baron," cried I; "I quite agree with you."

He turned towards me with a look of positive affection, on seeing I knew German, and we both began to talk together at once with freedom.

"What's the boy saying?" cried my father, as he caught the sounds of some glib speech of mine. "Don't let him bore you with his bad French, Steinmetz."

"He is charming me with his admirable German," said the Baron. "I can't tell when I have met a more agreeable companion."

This was, of course, a double flattery, for my German was very bad, and my knowledge on any subject no better; but the fact did not diminish the delight the praise afforded me.

"Do you know German, Digby?" asked my father.

"A little, — a very little, sir."

"The fellow would say he knew Sanscrit if you asked him," whispered Hotham to Eccles; but my sharp ears overheard him.

"Come, that's better than I looked for," said my father. "What do you say, Eccles? Is there stuff there?"

"Plenty, Sir Roger; enough and to spare. I count on Digby to do me great credit yet."

"What career do you mean your son to follow?" asked the Italian, while he nodded to me over his wine-glass in most civil recognition.

"I'll not make a sailor of him, like that sea-wolf yonder; nor a diplomatist, like my silent friend in the corner. Neither shall he be a soldier till British armies begin to do something better than hunt out illicit stills and protect process-servers."

"A politician, perhaps?"

"Certainly not, sir. There's no credit in belonging to a Parliament brought down to the meridian of soap-boilers and bankrupt bill-brokers."

"There's the Church, Sir Roger," chimed in Eccles.

"There's the Pope's Church, with some good prizes in the wheel; but your branch, Master Bob, is a small concern, and it is trembling, besides. No. I'll make him none of these. It is in our vulgar passion for money-getting we throw our boys into this or that career in life, and we narrow to the stupid formula of some profession abilities that were meant for mankind. I mean Digby to deal with the world; and to fit him for the task, he shall learn as much of human nature as I can afford to teach him."

"Ah, there 's great truth in that, very great truth; very wise and very original too," were the comments that ran round the board.

Excited by this theme, and elated by his success, my father went on: —

"If you want a boy to ride, you don't limit him to the quiet hackney that neither pulls nor shies, neither bolts nor plunges; and so, if you wish your son to know his fellow-men, you don't keep him in a charmed circle of deans and archdeacons, but you throw him fearlessly into contact with old debauchees like Hotham, or abandoned scamps of the style of Cleremont," — and here he had to wait till the laughter subsided to add, "and, last of all, you take care to provide him with a finishing tutor like Eccles."

"I knew your turn was coming, Bob," whispered Hotham; but still all laughed heartily, well satisfied to stand ridicule themselves if others were only pilloried with them.

When dinner was over, we sat about a quarter of an hour, not more, and then adjourned to coffee in a small room that seemed half boudoir, half conservatory. As I loitered about, having no one to speak to, I found myself at last in a little shrubbery, through which a sort of labyrinth meandered. It was a taste of the day revived from olden times, and amazed me much by its novelty. While I was puzzling myself to find out the path that led out of the entanglement, I heard a voice I knew at once to be Hotham's, saying, —

"Look at that boy of Norcott's: he 's not satisfied with the imbroglio within doors, but he must go out to mystify himself with another."

"I don't much fancy that young gentleman," said Cleremont.

"And I only half. Bob Eccles says we have all made a precious mistake in advising Norcott to bring him back."

"Yet it was our only chance to prevent it. Had we opposed the plan, he was sure to have determined on it. There 's nothing for it but your notion, Hotham; let him send the brat to sea with you."

"Yes, I think that would do it." And now they had walked out of earshot, and I heard no more.

If I was not much reassured by these droppings, I was far more moved by the way in which I came to hear them. Over and over had my dear mother cautioned me against listening to what was not meant for me; and here, simply because I found myself the topic, I could not resist the temptation to learn how men would speak of me. I remembered well the illustration by which my mother warned me as to the utter uselessness of the sort of knowledge thus gained. She told me of a theft some visitor had made at Abbotsford, — the object stolen being a signet-ring Lord Byron had given to Sir Walter. The man who stole this could never display the treasure without avowing himself a thief. He had, therefore, taken what from the very moment of the fraud became valueless. He might gaze on it in secret with such pleasure as his self-accusings would permit. He might hug himself with the thought of possession; but how could that give pleasure, or how drown the everlasting shame the mere sight of the object must revive? So would it be, my mother said, with him who unlawfully possessed himself of certain intelligence which he could not employ without being convicted of the way he gained it. The lesson thus illustrated had not ceased to be remembered by me; and though I tried all my casuistry to prove that I listened without intention, almost without being aware of it, I was shocked and grieved to find how soon I was forgetting the precepts she had labored so hard to impress upon me.

She had also said, "By the same rule which would compel you to restore to its owner what you had become possessed of wrongfully, you are bound to let him you have accidentally overheard know to what extent you are aware of his thoughts."

"This much, at least, I can do," said I: "I can tell these gentlemen that I heard a part of their conversation."

I walked about for nigh an hour revolving these things in my head, and at last returned to the house. As I entered the drawing-room, I was struck by the silence. My father, Cleremont, and the two foreigners were playing whist at one end of the room, Hotham and Eccles were seated at chess at another. Not a word was uttered save some brief demand of the game, or a murmured "check," by the chessplayers. Taking my place noiselessly beside these latter, I watched the board eagerly, to try and acquire the moves.

"Do you understand the game?" whispered Hotham.

"No, sir," said I, in the same cautious tone.

"I 'll show you the moves, when this party is over." And I muttered my thanks for the courtesy.

"This is intolerable!" cried out my father. "That confounded whispering is far more distracting than any noise. I have lost all count of my game. I say, Eccles, why is not that boy in bed?"

"I thought you said he might sup, Sir Roger."

"If I did, it was because I thought he knew how to conduct himself. Take him away at once."

And Eccles rose, and with more kindness than I had expected from him, said, "Come, Digby, I 'll go too, for we have both to be early risers to-morrow."

Thus ended my first day in public, and I have no need to say what a strange conflict filled my head that night as I dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW THE DAYS WENT OVER.

If I give one day of my life, I give, with very nearly exactness, the unbroken course of my existence. I rose very early — hours ere the rest of the household was stirring — to work at my lessons, which Mr. Eccles apportioned for me with a liberality that showed he had the highest opinion of my abilities, or — as I discovered later on to be the truth — a profound indifference about them. Thus, a hundred lines of Virgil, thirty of Xenophon, three propositions of Euclid, with a sufficient amount of history, geography, and logic, would be an ordinary day's work. It is fair I should own that when the time of examination came, I found him usually imbibing seltzer and curaçoa, with a wet towel round his head; or, in his robuster moments, practising the dumb bells to develop his muscles. So that the interrogatories were generally in this wise: —

"How goes it, Digby? What of the Homer, eh?"

"It 's Xenophon, sir."

"To be sure it is. I was forgetting, as a man might who had my headache. And, by the way, Digby, why will your father give Burgundy at supper instead of Bordeaux? Some one must surely have told him accidentally it was a deadly poison, for he adheres to it with desperate fidelity."

"I believe I know my Greek, sir," would I say, modestly, to recall him to the theme.

"Of course you do; you 'd cut a sorry figure here this morning if you did not know it. No, sir; I 'm not the man to enjoy your father's confidence, and take his money, and betray my trust. His words to me were, 'Make him a gentleman, Eccles. I could find scores of fellows to cram him with Greek particles and double equations, but I want the man who can turn out the perfect article, — the gentleman.' Come now, what relations subsisted between Cyrus and Xenophon?"

"Xenophon coached him, sir."

"So he did. Just strike a light for me. My head is splitting for want of a cigar. You may have a cigarette too. I don't object. Virgil we'll keep till to-morrow. Virgil was a muff, after all. Virgil was a decentish sort of Martin Tupper, Digby. He had no wit, no repartee, no smartness; he prosed about ploughs and shepherds, like a maudlin old squire; or he told a very shady sort of anecdote about Dido, which I always doubted should be put into the hands of youth. Horace is free, too, a thought too free; but he could n't help it. Horace lived the same kind of life we do here, a species of roast-partridge and pretty woman sort of life; but then he was the gentleman always. If old Flaccus had lived now, he'd have been pretty much like Bob Eccles, and putting in his divinity lectures perhaps. By the way, I hope your father won't go and give away that small rectory in Kent. 'We who live to preach, must preach to live.' That is n't exactly the line, but it will do. Pulvis et umbra sumus, Digby; and take what care we may of ourselves, we must go back, as the judges say, to the place from whence we came. There, now, you've had classical criticism, sound morality, worldly wisdom, and the rest of it; and, with your permission, we'll pack up the books, and stand prorogued till — let me see — Saturday next."

Of course I moved no amendment, and went my way rejoicing.

From that hour I was free to follow my own inclinations, which usually took a horsey turn; and as the stable offered several mounts, I very often rode six hours a day. Hotham was always to be found in the pistol-gallery about four of an afternoon, and I usually joined him there, and speedily became more than his match.

"Well, youngster," he would say, when beaten and irritable, "I can beat your head off at billiards, anyhow."

But I was not long in robbing him of even this boast, and in less than three months I could defy the best player in the house. The fact was, I had in a remarkable degree that small talent for games of every kind which is a speciality with certain persons. I could not only learn a game quickly, but almost always attain considerable skill in it.

"So, sir," said my father to me one day at dinner, — and nothing was more rare than for him to address a word to me, and I was startled as he did so, — "so, sir, you are going to turn out an Admirable Crichton on my hands, it seems. I hear of nothing but your billiard-playing, your horsemanship, and your cricketing, while Mr. Eccles tells me that your progress with him is equally remarkable."

He stopped and seemed to expect me to make some rejoinder; but I could not utter a word, and felt overwhelmed at the observation and notice his speech had drawn upon me.

"It 's better I should tell you at once," resumed my father, "that I dislike prodigies. I dislike because I distrust them. The fellow who knows at fourteen what he might reasonably have known at thirty is not unlikely to stop short at fifteen and grow no more. I don't wish to be personal, but I have heard it said Cleremont was a very clever boy."

The impertinence of this speech, and the laughter it at once excited, served to turn attention away from me; but, through the buzz and murmur around, I overheard Cleremont say to Hotham, "I shall pull him up short one of these days, and you 'll see an end of all this."

"Now," continued my father, "if Eccles had told me that the boy was a skilful hand at sherry-cobbler, or a rare judge of a Cuban cigar, I 'd have reposed more faith in the assurance than when he spoke of his classics."

"He ain't bad at a gin-sling with bitters, that I must say," said Eccles, whose self-control or good-humor, or mayhap some less worthy trait, always carried him successfully over a difficulty.

"So, sir," said my father, turning again on me, "the range of your accomplishments is complete. You might be a tapster or a jockey. When the nobility of France came to ruin in the Revolution, the best blood of the kingdom became barbers and dancing-masters: so that when some fine morning that gay gentleman yonder will discover that he is a beggar, he 'll have no difficulty in finding a calling to suit his tastes, and square with his abilities. What 's Hotham grumbling about? Will any one interpret him for me?"

"Hotham is saying that this claret is corked," said the sea-captain, with a hoarse loud voice.

"Bottled at home!" said my father, "and, like your own education, Hotham, spoiled for a beggarly economy."

"I 'm glad you 've got it," muttered Cleremont, whose eyes glistened with malignant spite. "I have had enough of this; I 'm for coffee," and he arose as he spoke.

"Has Cleremont left us?" asked my father.

"Yes; that last bottle has finished him. I told you before, Nixon knows nothing about wine. I saw that hogshead lying bung up for eight weeks before it was drawn off for bottling."

"Why did n't you speak to him about it, then?"

"And be told that I 'm not his master, eh? You don't seem to know, Norcott, that you 've got a houseful of the most insolent servants in Christendom. Cleremont's wife wanted the chestnuts yesterday in the phaeton, and George refused her: she might take the cobs, or nothing."

"Quite true," chimed in Eccles; "and the fellow said, 'I 'm a-taking the young horses out in the break, and if the missis wants to see the chestnuts, she 'd better come with *me*.'"

"And as to a late breakfast now, it 's quite impossible; they delay and delay till they run you into luncheon," growled Hotham.

"They serve me my chocolate pretty regularly," said my father, negligently, and he arose and strolled out of the room. As he went, he slipped his arm within mine, and said, in a half-whisper, "I suppose it will come to this, — I shall have to change my friends or my household. Which would you advise?"

"I 'd say the friends, sir."

"So should I, but that they would not easily find another place. There, go and see is the billiard-room lighted. I want to see you play a game with Cleremont."

Cleremont was evidently sulking under the sarcasm passed on him, and took up his cue to play with a bad grace.

"Who will have five francs on the party?" said my father. "I'm going to back the boy."

"Make it pounds, Norcott," said Hotham.

"I'll give you six to five, in tens," said Cleremont to my father. "Will you take it?"

I was growing white and red by turns all this time. I was terrified at the thought that money was to be staked on my play, and frightened by the mere presence of my father at the table.

"The youngster is too nervous to play. Don't let him, Norcott," said Hotham, with a kindness I had not given him credit for.

"Give me the cue, Digby; I'll take your place," said my father; and Cleremont and Hotham both drew nigh, and talked to him in a low tone.

"Eight and the stroke then be it," said my father, "and the bet in fifties." The others nodded, and Cleremont began the game.

I could not have believed I could have suffered the amount of intense anxiety that game cost me. Had my life been on the issue, I do not think I could have gone through greater alternations of hope and fear than now succeeded in my heart. Cleremont started with eight points odds, and made thirty-two off the balls before my father began to play. He now took his place, and by the first stroke displayed a perfect mastery of the game. There was a sort of languid grace, an indolent elegance about all he did, that when the stroke required vigor or power made me tremble for the result; but somehow he imparted the exact amount of force needed, and the balls moved about here and there as though obedient to some subtle instinct of which the cue gave a mere sign. He scored forty-two points in a few minutes, and then drawing himself up, said, "There's an eight-stroke now on the table. I'll give any one three hundred Naps to two that I do it."

None spoke. "Or I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll take fifty from each of you and draw the game!" Another as complete silence ensued. "Or here's a third proposition, Give me fifty between you, and I'll hand over the cue to the boy; he shall finish the game."

"Oh, no, sir! I beg you — I entreat — " I began; but already, "Done," had been loudly uttered by both together, and the bet was ratified.

"Don't be nervous, boy," said my father, handing me his cue. "You see what 's on the balls. You cannon and hold the white, and land the red in the middle pocket. If you can't do the brilliant thing, and finish the game with an eight stroke, do the safe one, — the cannon or the hazard. But, above all, don't lose your stroke, sir. Mind that, for I 've a pot of money on the game."

"I don't think you ought to counsel him, Norcott," said Cleremont. "If he 's a player, he 's fit to devise his own game."

"Oh, hang it, no," broke in Hotham; "Norcott has a perfect right to tell him what 's on the table."

"If you object seriously, sir," said my father proudly, "the party is at an end."

"I put it to yourself," began Cleremont.

"You shall not appeal to me against myself, sir. You either withdraw your objection, or you maintain it."

"Of course he withdraws it," said Hotham, whose eyes never wandered from my father's face.

Cleremont nodded a half-unwilling assent.

"You will do me the courtesy to speak, perhaps," said my father; and every word came from him with a tremulous roll.

"Yes, yes, I agree. There was really nothing in my remark," said Cleremont, whose self-control seemed taxed to its last limit.

"There, go on, boy, and finish this stupid affair," said my father, and he turned to the chimney to light his cigar.

I leaned over the table, and a mist seemed to rise before me. I saw volumes of cloud rolling swiftly across, and meteors, or billiard-balls, I knew not which, shooting through them. I played and missed; I did not even strike a ball. A wild roar of laughter, a cry of joy, and a confused blending of several voices in various tones followed, and I stood there like one stunned into immobility. Meanwhile Cleremont finished the game, and, clapping me gayly on the shoulder, cried, "I 'm more grateful to you than your father is, my lad. That shaking hands of yours has made a difference of two hundred Naps to me." I turned towards the fire; my father had left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

A PRIVATE AUDIENCE.

I HAD but reached my room when Eccles followed me to say my father wished to see me at once.

"Come, come, Digby," said Eccles, good-naturedly, "don't be frightened. Even if he should be angry with you, his passion passes soon over; and, if uncontradicted, he is never disposed to bear a grudge long. Go immediately, however, and don't keep him waiting."

I cannot tell with what a sense of abasement I entered my father's dressing-room; for, after all, it was the abject condition of my own mind that weighed me down.

"So, sir," said he, as I closed the door, "this is something I was not prepared for. You might be forty things, but I certainly did not suspect that a son of mine should be a coward."

Had my father ransacked his whole vocabulary for a term of insult, he could not have found one to pain me like this.

"I am not a coward, sir," said I, reddening till I felt my face in a perfect glow.

"What!" cried he, passionately; "are you going to give me a proof of courage by daring to outrage *me?* Is it by sending back my words in my teeth you assume to be brave?"

"I ask pardon, sir," said I, humbly, "if I have replied rudely; but you called me by a name that made me forget myself. I hope you will forgive me."

"Sit down, there, sir; no, there." And he pointed to a more distant chair. "There are various sorts and shades of cowardice, and I would not have you tarnished with any one of them. The creature whose first thought, and indeed only one, in an emergency is his personal safety, and who, till that condition is secured, abstains from all action, is below contempt; him I will not even consider. But next to him — of course with a long interval — comes the fellow who is so afraid of a responsibility that the very thought of it unmans him. How did the fact of my wager come to influence you at all, sir? Why should you have had any thought but for the game you were playing, and how it behoved you to play it? How came I and these gentlemen to stand between you and your real object, if it were not that a craven dread of consequences had got the ascendancy in your mind? If men were to be beset by these calculations, if every fellow carried about him an armor of sophistry like this, he 'd have no hand free to wield a weapon, and the world would see neither men who storm a breach nor board an enemy. Till a man can so isolate and concentrate his faculties on what he has to do that all extraneous conditions cease to affect him, he will never be well served by his own powers; and he who is but half served is only half brave. There are times when the unreasoners are worth all the men of logic, remember that. And now go and sleep over it."

He motioned me to withdraw, but I could not bear to go till he had withdrawn the slur he had cast on me in the word coward. He looked at me steadfastly, but not harshly, for a moment or two, and then said, —

"You are not to think that it is out of regret for a lost sum of money I have read you this lecture. As to the wager itself, I am as well pleased that it ended as it did. These gentlemen are not rich, either of them. I can afford the loss. What I cannot afford is the way I lost it."

"But will you not say, sir, that I am no coward?" said I, faltering.

"I will withdraw the word," said he, slowly, "the very first time I shall see you deal with a difficulty without a thought for what it may cost you. There; good-night; leave me now. I mean to have a ride with you in the morning."

And he nodded twice, and smiled, and dismissed me.

There was nothing, certainly, very flattering to me in this reception. It cost me dearly while it lasted, and yet — I cannot explain why — I came away with a feeling of affection for my father, and a desire to stand well in his esteem, such as I had not experienced till that moment. It was his utter indifference up to this that had chilled and repelled me. Any show of interest, anything that might evidence that he cared what I was or what I might become, was so much better than this apathy that I welcomed the change with delight. Accustomed to the tender solicitude of a loving mother, no niggard of her praise, and more given to sympathize than blame, the stern reserve of my father's manner had been a terrible reverse, and over and over had I asked myself why he took me from where I was loved and cherished, to live this life of ceremonious observance and cold deference.

To know that he felt even such interest in me as this, was to restore me to self-esteem at once. He would not have his son a coward, he said; and as I felt in my heart that I was not a coward, as I knew I was ready then and there to confront any peril he could propose to me, all that the speech left in my memory was a sense of self-satisfaction.

In each of the letters I had received from my mother she impressed on me how important it was that I should win my father's affection, and now a hope flashed across me that I might do this. I sat down to tell her all that had passed between us; but somehow, in recounting the incident of the billiard-room, I wandered away into a description of the house, its splendors and luxury, and of the life of costly pleasure that we were living. "You will ask, dearest mamma," I wrote. "how and when I find time to study amidst all these dissipations? and I grieve to own that I do very little. Mr. Eccles says he is satisfied with me; but I fear it is more because I obtrude little on his notice than that I am making any progress. We are still in the same scene of the Adrian that I began with you; and as to the Greek, we leave it over for Saturdays, and the Saturdays get skipped. I have become a good shot with the rifle; and George says I have the finest, lightest hand he knows on a horse, and that he'll make me yet a regular steeple-chase horseman. I have a passion for riding, and sometimes get four mounts on a day. Indeed, papa takes no interest in the stable, and I give all the orders, and can have a team harnessed for me — which I do — when I am tired with the saddle. They have not quite given up calling me 'that boy of Norcott's;' only now, when they do so, it is to say how well he rides, and what a taste he shows for driving and shooting.

"Don't be afraid that I am neglecting my music. I play every day, and take singing lessons with an Italian: they call him the Count Guastalla; but I believe he is the tenor of the opera here, and only teaches me out of compliment to papa. He dines here nearly every day, and plays piquet with papa all the evening.

"There is a very beautiful lady comes here, — Madame Cleremont. She is the wife of the Secretary to the Legation. She is French, and has such pleasing ways, and is so gay, and so good-natured, and so fond of gratifying me in every way, that I delight in being with her; and we ride out together constantly, and I am now teaching her to drive the ponies, and she enjoys it just as I used myself. I don't think papa likes her, for he seldom speaks to her, and never takes her in to dinner if there is another lady in the room; and I suspect she feels this, for she is often very sad. I dislike Mr. Cleremont; he is always saying snappish things, and is never happy, no matter how merry we are. But papa seems to like him best of all the people here. Old Captain Hotham and I are great friends, though he 's always saying, 'You ought to be at sea, youngster. This sort of life will only make a blackleg of you.' But I can't make out why, because I am very happy and have so much to interest and amuse me, I must become a scamp. Mdme. Cleremont says, too, it is not true; that papa is bringing me up exactly as he ought, that I will enter life as a gentleman, and not be passing the best years of my existence in learning the habits of the well-bred world. They fight bitterly over this every day; but she always gets the victory, and then kisses me, and says, 'Mon cher petit Digby, I 'll not have you spoiled, to please any vulgar prejudice of a tiresome old sea-captain.' This she whispers, for she would not offend him for anything. Dear mamma, how you would love her if you knew her! I believe I 'm to go to Rugby to school; but I hope not, for how I shall live like a schoolboy after all this happiness I don't know; and Mdme. Cleremont says she will never permit it; but she has no influence over papa, and how could she prevent it? Captain Hotham is always saying, 'If Norcott does not send that boy to Harrow or Rugby, or some of these places, he'll graduate in the Marshalsea — that's a prison — before he's twenty.' I am so glad when a day passes without my being brought up for the subject of a discussion, which papa always ends with, 'After all I was neither an Etonian nor Rugbeian, and I suspect I can hold my own with most men; and if that boy does n't belie his breeding, perhaps he may do so too.'

"Nobody likes contradicting papa, especially when he says anything in a certain tone of voice, and whenever he uses this, the conversation turns away to something else.

"I forgot to say in my last, that your letters always come regularly. They arrive with papa's, and he sends them up to me at once, by his valet, Mons. Durand, who is always so nicely dressed, and has a handsomer watch-chain than papa.

"Mdme. Cleremont said yesterday, 'I'm so sorry not to know your dear mamma, Digby: but if I dared, I'd send her so many caresses, *de ma part*.' I said nothing at the time, but I send them now, and am your loving son,

"DIGBY NORCOTT."

This letter was much longer than it appears here. It filled several sides of note-paper, and occupied me till daybreak. Indeed, I heard the bell ringing for the workmen as I closed it, and shortly after a gentle tap came to my door, and George Spunner, our head groom, entered.

"I saw you at the window, Master Digby," said he, "and I thought I'd step up and tell you not to ride in spurs this morning. Sir Roger wants to see you on May Blossom, and you know she's a hot 'un, sir, and don't want the steel. Indeed, if she feels the boot, she's as much as a man can do to sit."

"You're a good fellow, George, to think of this," said I. "Do you know where we're going?"

"That's what I was going to tell you, sir. We are going to the Bois de Cambre, and there's two of our men gone on with hurdles, to set them up in the cross alleys of the wood, and we're to come on 'em unawares, you see."

"Then why don't you give me Father Tom or Hungerford?"

"The master would n't have either. He said, 'A child of five years old could ride the Irish horse;' and as for Hungerford, he calls him a circus horse."

"But who knows if Blossom will take a fence?"

"I'll warrant she'll go high enough; how she'll come down, and where, is another matter. Only don't you go a-pullin' at her, ride her in the snaffle, and as light as you can. Face her straight at what she's got to go over, and let her choose her own pace."

"I declare I don't see how this is a fair trial of my riding, George. Do you?"

"Well, it is, and it is n't," said he, scratching his head. "You might have a very tidy hand and a nice seat, and not be able to ride the mare; but then, sir, you see, if you have the judgment to manage her coolly, and not rouse her temper too far, if you can bring her to a fence, and make her take off at a proper distance, and fly it, never changing her stride nor balk, why then he'll see you can ride."

"And if she rushes, or comes with her chest to a bank, or if — as I think she will — she refuses her fence, rears, and falls back, what then?"

"Then I think the mornin's sport will be pretty nigh over," growled he; as though I had suggested something personally offensive to him.

"What time do we go, George?"

"Sir Roger said seven, sir, but that will be eight or half-past. He's to drive over to the wood, and the horses are to meet him there."

"All right. I'll take a short sleep and be sharp to time."

As he left the room, I tore open my letter, to add a few words. I thought I'd say something that, if mischance befell me, might be a comfort to my dear mother to read over and dwell on, but for the life of me I did not know how to do it, without exciting alarm or awakening her to the dread of some impending calamity. Were I to say, I 'm off for a ride with papa, it meant nothing; and if I said, I 'm going to show him how I can manage a very hot horse, it might keep her in an agony of suspense till I wrote again.

So I merely added, "I intend to write to you very soon again, and hope I may do so within the week." These few commonplace words had a great meaning to my mind, however little they might convey to her I wrote them to; and as I read them over, I stored them with details supplied by imagination, — details so full of incident and catastrophe that they made a perfect story. After this I lay down and slept heavily.

CHAPTER VIII.

A DARK-ROOM PICTURE.

My next letter to my mother was very short, and ran thus: —

"Dearest Mamma, — Don't be shocked at my bad writing, for I had a fall on Tuesday last, and hurt my arm a little; nothing broken, but bruised and sore to move, so that I lie on my bed and read novels. Madame never leaves me, but sits here to put ice on my shoulder and play chess with me. She reads out Balzac for me, and I don't know when I had such a jolly life. It was a rather big hurdle, and the mare took it sideways, and caught her hind leg, — at least they say so, — but we came down together, and she rolled over me. Papa cried out well done, for I did not lose my saddle, and he has given me a gold watch and a seal with the Norcott crest. Every one is so kind; and Captain Hotham comes up after dinner and tells me all the talk of the table, and we smoke and have our coffee very nicely.

"Papa comes every night before supper, and is very good to me. He says that Blossom is now my own, but I must teach her to come cooler to her fences. I can't write more, for my pain comes back when I stir my arm. You shall hear of me constantly, if I cannot write myself.

"Oh, dearest mamma, when papa is kind there is no one like him, — so gentle, so thoughtful, so soft in manner, and so dignified all the while. I wish you could see him as he stood here. A thousand loves from your own boy,

"Digby."

Madame Cleremont wrote by the same post. I did not see her letter; but when mamma's answer came I knew it must have been a serious version of my accident, and told how, besides a dislocated shoulder, I had got a broken collar-bone, and two ribs fractured. With all this, however, there was no danger to life; for the doctor said everything had gone luckily, and no internal parts were wounded.

Poor mamma had added a postscript that puzzled Madame greatly, and she came and showed it to me, and asked what I thought she could do about it. It was an entreaty that she might be permitted to come and see me. There was a touching humility in the request that almost choked me with emotion as I read it. "I could come and go unknown and unnoticed," wrote she. "None of Sir Roger's household have ever seen me, and my visit might pass for the devotion of some old follower of the family, and I will promise not to repeat it." She urged her plea in the most beseeching terms, and said that she would submit to any conditions if her prayer were only complied with.

"I really do not know what to do here," said Madame to me. "Without your father's concurrence this cannot be done; and who is to ask him for permission?"

"Shall I?"

"No, no, no," cried she, rapidly. "Such a step on your part would be ruin; a certain refusal, and ruin to yourself."

"Could Mr. Eccles do it?"

"He has no influence whatever."

"Has Captain Hotham?"

"Less, if less be possible."

"Mr. Cleremont, then?"

"Ah, yes, he might, and with a better chance of success; but—" She stopped, and though I waited patiently, she did not finish her sentence.

"But what?" asked I at last.

"Gaston hates doing a hazardous thing," said she; and I remarked that her expression changed, and her face assumed a hard, stern look as she spoke. "His theory is, do nothing without three to one in your favor. He says you 'll always gets these odds, if you only wait."

"But you don't believe that," cried I, eagerly.

"Sometimes — very seldom, that is, I do not whenever I can help it." There was a long pause now, in which neither of us spoke. At last she said, "I can't aid your mother in this project. She must give it up. There is no saying how your father would resent it."

"And how will you tell her that?" faltered I out.

"I can't tell. I'll try and show her the mischief it might bring upon you; and that now, standing high, as you do, in your father's favor, she would never forgive herself, if she were the cause of a change towards you. This consideration will have more weight with her than any that could touch herself personally."

"But it shall not," cried I, passionately. "Nothing in *my* fortune shall stand between my mother and her love for me."

She bent down and looked at me with an intensity in her stare that I cannot describe; it was as if, by actual steadfastness, she was able to fix me, and read me in my inmost heart.

"From which of your parents, Digby," said she, slowly, "do you derive this nature?"

"I do not know; papa always says I am very like him."

"And do you believe that papa is capable of great self-sacrifice? I mean, would he let his affections lead him against his interests?"

"That he would! He has told me over and over the head is as often wrong as right, — the heart only errs about once in five times." She fell on my neck and kissed me as I said this, with a sort of rapturous delight. "Your heart will be always right, dear boy," said she; once more she bent down and kissed me, and then hurried away.

This scene must have worked more powerfully on my nerves than I felt, or was aware of, while it was passing; at all events, it brought back my fever, and before night I was in wild delirium. Of the seven long weeks that followed, with all their alternations, I know nothing. My first consciousness was to know myself, as very weak and propped by pillows, in a half-darkened room, in which an old nurse-tender sat and mingled her heavy snorings with the ticking of the clock on the chimney. Thus drowsily pondering, with a debilitated brain, I used to fancy that I had passed away into another form of existence, in which no sights or sounds should come but these dreary breathings, and that remorseless ticking that seemed to be spelling out "eternity."

Sometimes one, sometimes two or three persons would enter the room, approach the bed, and talk together in whispers, and I would languidly lift up my eyes and look at them, and though I thought they were not altogether unknown to me, the attempt at recognition would have been an effort so full of pain that I would, rather than make it, fall back again into apathy. The first moment of perfect consciousness — when I could easily follow all that I heard, and remember it afterwards — was one evening, when a faint but delicious air came in through the open window, and the rich fragrance of the garden filled the room. Captain Hotham and the doctor were seated on the balcony smoking and chatting.

"You 're sure the tobacco won't be bad for him?" asked Hotham.

"Nothing will be bad or good now," was the answer. "Effusion has set in."

"Which means, that it 's all over, eh?"

"About one in a thousand, perhaps, rub through. My own experience records no instance of recovery."

"And you certainly did not take such a gloomy view of his case at first. You told me that there were no vital parts touched?"

"Neither were there; the ribs had suffered no displacement, and as for a broken clavicle, I 've known a fellow get up and finish his race after it. This boy was doing famously. I don't know that I ever saw a case going on better, when some of them here — it 's not easy to say whom — sent off for his mother to come and see him. Of course, without Norcott's knowledge. It was a rash thing to do, and not well done either; for when the woman arrived, there was no preparation made, either with the boy or herself, for their meeting; and the result was that when she crossed the threshold and saw him she fainted away. The youngster tried to get to her and fainted too; a great hubbub and noise followed; and Norcott himself appeared. The scene that ensued must have been, from what I heard, terrific. He either ordered the woman out of the house, or he dragged her away, — it 's not easy to say which; but it is quite clear that he went absolutely mad with passion: some say that he told them to pack off the boy along with her, but, of course, this was sheer impossibility; the boy was insensible, and has been so ever since."

"I was at Namur that day, but they told me when I came back that Cleremont's wife had behaved so well; that she had the courage to face Norcott; and though I don't believe she did much by her bravery, she drove him off the field to his own room, and when his wife did leave the house for the railroad, it was in one of Norcott's carriages, and Madame herself accompanied her."

"Is she his wife? that 's the question."

"There 's not a doubt of it. Blenkworth of the Grays was at the wedding.

"If I were to be examined before a commission of lunacy to-morrow," said the doctor, solemnly, "I 'd call that man insane."

"And you 'd shut him up?"

"I 'd shut him up!"

"Then I 'm precious glad you are not called on to give an opinion, for you 'd shut up the best house in this quarter of Europe."

"And what security have you any moment that he won't make a clean sweep of it, and turn you all into the streets?"

"Yes; that 's on the cards any day."

"He must have got through almost everything he had; besides, I never heard his property called six thousand a year, and I 'll swear twelve would n't pay his way here."

"What does he care! His father and he agreed to cut off the entail; and seeing the sort of marriage he made, he 'll not fret much at leaving the boy a beggar."

"But he likes him; if there 's anything in the world he cares for, it 's that boy!"

The other must have made some gesture of doubt or dissent, for the doctor quickly added, "No, no, I 'm right about that. It was only yesterday morning he said to me with a shake in the voice there 's no mistaking, 'If you can come and tell me, doctor, that he 's out of danger, I 'll give you a thousand pounds.'"

"Egad, I think I'd have done it, even though I might have made a blunder."

"Ye 're no a doctor, sir, that 's plain;" and in the emotion of the moment he spoke the words with a strong Scotch accent.

There was a silence of some minutes, and Hotham said, "That little Frenchwoman and I have no love lost between us, but I 'm glad she cut up so well."

"They 're strange natures, there 's no denying it. They 'll do less from duty and more from impulse than any people in the world, and they 're never thoroughly proud of themselves except when they 're all wrong."

"That 's a neat character for Frenchwomen," said Hotham, laughing.

"I think Norcott will be looking out for his whist by this time," said the other; and they both arose, and passing noiselessly through the room, moved away.

I had enough left me to think over, and I did think over it till I fell asleep.

CHAPTER IX.

MADAME CLEREMONT.

FROM that day forth I received no tidings of my mother. Whether my own letters reached her or not, I could not tell; and though I entreated Madame Cleremont, who was now my confidante in everything, to aid me in learning where my mother was, she declared that the task was beyond her; and at last, as time went over, my anxieties became blunted and my affections dulled. The life I was leading grew to have such a hold upon me, and was so full of its own varied interests, that — with shame I say it — I actually forgot the very existence of her to whom I owed any trace of good or honest or truthful that was in me.

The house in which I was living was a finishing school for every sort of dissipation, and all who frequented it were people who only lived for pleasure. Play of the highest kind went on unceasingly, and large sums were bandied about from hand to hand as carelessly as if all were men of fortune and indifferent to heavy losses.

A splendid mode of living, sumptuous dinners, a great retinue, and perfect liberty to the guests. drew around us that class who, knowing well that they have no other occupation than self-indulgence, throw an air of languid elegance over vice, which your vulgar sinner, who has only intervals of wickedness, knows nothing of; and this, be it said passingly, is, of all sections of society, the most seductive and dangerous to the young: for there are no outrages to taste amongst these people, they violate no decencies, they shock no principles. If they smash the tables of the law, it is in kid-gloves, and with a delicious odor of Ess *bouquet* about them. The Cleremonts lived at the Villa. Cleremont managed the household, and gave the orders for everything. Madame received the company, and did the honors; my father lounging about like an unoccupied guest, and actually amused, as it seemed, by his own unimportance. Hotham had gone to sea; but Eccles remained, in name, as my tutor; but we rarely met, save at meal-times, and his manner to me was almost slavish in subserviency, and with a habit of flattery that, even young as I was, revolted me.

"Is n't that your charge, Eccles?" I once heard an old gentleman ask him; and he replied, "Yes, my Lord; but Madame Cleremont has succeeded me. It is *she* is finishing him."

And they both laughed heartily at the joke. There was, however, this much of truth in the speech, that I lived almost entirely in her society. We sang together; she called me Cherubino, and taught me all the page's songs in Mozart or Rossini; and we rode out together, or read or walked in company. Nor was her influence over me such as might effeminate me. On the contrary, it was ever her aim to give me manly tastes and ambitions. She laid great stress on my being a perfect swordsman and a pistol-shot, over and over telling me that a conscious skill in arms gives a man immense coolness in every question of difference with other men; and she would add, "Don't fall into that John Bull blunder of believing that duelling is gone out because they dislike the practice in England. The world is happily larger than the British Islands."

Little sneers like this at England, sarcasms on English prudery, English reserve, or English distrustfulness, were constantly dropping from her, and I grew up to believe that while genuine sentiment and unselfish devotion lived on one side of the Channel, a decorous hypocrisy had its home on the other.

Now she would contrast the women of Balzac's novels with the colder nonentities of English fiction; and now she would dwell on traits of fascination in the sex which our writers either did not know of or were afraid to touch on. "It is entirely the fault of your Englishwomen," she would say, "that the men invariably fall victims to foreign seductions. Circe always sings with a bronchitis in the North;"

and though I but dimly saw what she pointed at then, I lived to perceive her meaning more fully.

As for my father, I saw little of him, but in that little he was always kind and good-natured with me. He would quiz me about my lessons, as though I were the tutor, and Eccles the pupil; and ask me how he got on with his Aristophanes or his Homer? He talked to me freely about the people who came to the house, and treated me almost as an equal. All this time he behaved to Madame with a reserve that was perfectly chilling, so that it was the rarest thing in the world for the three of us to be together.

"I don't think you like papa," said I once to her, in an effusion of confidence. "I am sure you don't like him!"

"And why do you think so?" asked she, with the faintest imaginable flush on her pale cheek.

While I was puzzling myself what to answer, she said, —

"Come now, Cherubino, what you really meant to say was, I don't think papa likes *you!*"

Though I never could have made so rude a speech, its truth and force struck me so palpably that I could not answer.

"Well," cried she, with a little laugh, "he is very fond of Monsieur Cleremont, and that ought always to be enough for Madame Cleremont. Do you know, Cherubino, it's the rarest thing in life for a husband and wife to be liked by the same people? There is in conjugal life some beautiful little ingredient of discord that sets the two partners to the compact at opposite poles, and gives them separate followings. I must n't distract you with the theory, I only want you to see why liking my husband is sufficient reason for not caring for *me*."

Now, as I liked her exceedingly, and felt something very near to hatred for Monsieur Cleremont, I accepted all she said as incontestable truth. Still I grieved over the fact that papa was not of my own mind, and did not see her and all her fascinations as I did.

There is something indescribably touching in the gentle sadness of certain buoyant bright natures. Like the low notes in a treble voice, there is that that seems to vibrate in our hearts at a most susceptible moment, and with the force of an unforeseen contrast; and it was thus that, in her graver times, she won over me an ascendancy, and inspired an interest which, had I been other than a mere boy, had certainly been love.

Perhaps I should not have been even conscious, as I was, of this sentiment, if it were not for the indignation I felt at Cleremont's treatment of her. Over and over again my temper was pushed to its last limit by his brutality and coarseness. His tone was a perpetual sneer, and his wife seldom spoke before him without his directing towards her a sarcasm or an impertinence. This was especially remarkable if she uttered any sentiment at all elevated, when his banter would be ushered in with a burst of derisive laughter.

Nothing could be more perfect than the way she bore these trials. There was no assumed martyrdom, no covert appeal for sympathy, no air of suffering asking for protection. No! whether it came as ridicule or rebuke, she accepted it gently and good-humoredly; trying, when she could, to turn it off with a laugh, or when too grave for that, bearing it with quiet forbearance.

I often wondered why my father did not check these persecutions, for they were such, and very cruel ones too; but he scarcely seemed to notice them, or if he did, it would be by a smile, far more like enjoyment of Cleremont's coarse wit than reprehending or reproving it.

"I wonder how that woman stands it?" I once overheard Hotham say to Eccles; and the other replied, —

"I don't think she *does* stand it. I mistake her much if she is as forgiving as she looks."

Why do I recall these things? Why do I dwell on incidents and passages which had no actual bearing on my own destiny? Only because they serve to show the terrible school in which I was brought up; the mingled dissipation, splendor, indolence, and passion in which my boyhood was passed. Surrounded by men of reckless habits, and women but a mere shade better, life presented itself to me as one series of costly pleasures, dashed only with such disappointments as loss at play inflicted, or some project of intrigue baffled or averted.

"If that boy of Norcott's is n't a scamp, he must be a most unteachable young rascal," said an old colonel once to Eccles on the croquet ground.

"He has had great opportunities," said Eccles, as he sent off his ball, "and, so far as I see, neglected none of them."

"You were his tutor, I think?" said the other, with a laugh.

"Yes, till Madame Cleremont took my place."

"I 'll not say it was the worst thing could have happened him. I wish it had been a woman had spoiled *me.* Eh, Eccles, possibly you may have some such misgivings yourself?"

"I was never corrupted," said the other, with a sententious gravity whose hypocrisy was palpable.

I meditated many and many a time over these few words, and they suggested to me the first attempt I ever made to know something about myself and my own nature.

Those stories of Balzac's, those wonderful pictures of passionate life, acquired an immense hold upon me, from the very character of my own existence. That terrific game of temper against temper, mind against mind, and heart against heart, of which I read in these novels, I was daily witnessing in what went on around me, and I amused myself by giving the names of the characters in these fictions to the various persons of our society.

"It is a very naughty little world we live in at this house, Digby," said Madame to me one day; "but you 'd be surprised to find what a very vulgar thing is the life of people in general, and that if you want the sensational, or even the pictorial in existence, you 'll have to pay for it in some compromise of principle."

"I know mamma would n't like to live here," said I, half sullenly.

"Oh, mamma!" cried she, with a laugh, and then suddenly checking herself: "No, Digby, you are quite right. Mamma would be shocked at our doings; not that they are so very wicked in themselves as that, to one of her quiet ways, they would seem so."

"Mamma is very good. I never knew any one like her," stammered I out.

"That 's quite true, my dear boy. She is all that you say, but one may be too good, just as he may be too generous or too confiding; and it is well to remember that there are a number of excellent things one would like to be if they could afford them; but the truth is, Digby, the most costly of all things are virtues."

"Oh, do not say that!" cried I, eagerly.

"Yes, dear, I must say it. Monsieur Cleremont and I have always been very poor, and we never permitted ourselves these luxuries, any more than we kept a great house and a fine equipage, and so we economize in our morals, as in our means, doing what rich folk might call little shabbinesses; but, on the whole, managing to live, and not unhappily either."

"And papa?"

"Papa has a fine estate, wants for nothing, and can give himself every good quality he has a fancy for."

"By this theory, then, it is only rich people are good?"

"Not exactly. I would rather state it thus, — the rich are as good as they like to be; the poor are as good as they 're able."

"What do you say, then, to Mr. Eccles: he 's not rich, and I 'm sure he 's good?"

"Poor Mr. Eccles!" said she, with a merry laughter, in which a something scornful mingled, and she hurried away.

CHAPTER X.

PLANNING PLEASURE.

It was my father's pleasure to celebrate my sixteenth birthday with great splendor. The whole house was to be thrown open; and not only the house, but the conservatory and the grounds were to be illuminated. The festivities were to comprise a grand dinner and a reception afterwards, which was to become a ball, as if by an impromptu.

As the society of the Villa habitually was made up of a certain number of intimates, relieved, from time to time, by such strangers as were presented, and as my father never dined out, or went into the fashionable world of the place, it was somewhat of a bold step at once to invite a number of persons with whom we had no more than bowing acquaintance, and to ask to his table ministers, envoys, court officials, and grand chamberlains for the first time. It was said, I know not how truthfully, that Cleremont did his utmost to dissuade him from the project at first, by disparaging the people for whom he was putting himself to such cost, and, finding this line of no avail, by openly saying that what between the refusals of some, the excuses of others, and the actual absence of many whose presence he was led to expect, my father was storing up for himself an amount of disappointment and outrage that would drive him half desperate. It was not, of course, very easy to convey this to my father. It could only be done by a dropping word or a half-expressed doubt. And when the time came to make out the lists and issue the invitations, no real step had been taken to turn him from his plan.

The same rumor which ascribed to Cleremont the repute of attempting to dissuade my father from his project, attributed to Madame Cleremont a most eager and warm advocacy of the intended *fête*. From the marked coldness and reserve, however, which subsisted between my father and her, it was too difficult to imagine in what way her influence could be exercised.

And for my own part, though I heard the list of the company canvassed every day at luncheon, and discussed at dinner, I don't remember an occasion where Madame ever uttered a word of remark, or even a suggestion in the matter. Hotham, who had come back on a short leave, was full of the scheme. With all a sailor's love of movement and bustle, he mixed himself up with every detail of it. He wrote to Paris and London for all the delicacies of the "comestible" shops. He established "estafettes" on every side to bring in fresh flowers and fruit; with his own hands he rigged out tents and marquees for the regimental bands, which were to be stationed in different parts of the grounds; and all the devices of Bengal lights and fireworks he took into his especial charge.

Indeed, Nixon told me that his functions did not stop here, but that he had charged himself with the care of Madame Cleremont's toilette, for whom he had ordered the most splendid ball-dress Paris could produce. "Naturally, Master Digby, it is Sir Roger pays," added he; "and perhaps one of these days he'll be surprised to find that diamond loops and diamond bouquets should figure in a milliner's bill. But as she is to receive the company, of course it's all right."

"And why does Mr. Cleremont seem to dislike it all so much?" asked I.

"Chiefly, I believe, because *she* likes it." And then, as though he had said more than he intended, he added: "Oh, it's easy to see he likes to keep this house as much his own as he can. He does n't want Sir Roger to have other people about him. He's almost the master here now; but if your father begins to mix with the world, and have strangers here, Cleremont's reign would soon be over."

Though there was much in this speech to suggest thought and speculation, nothing in it struck me so forcibly as the impertinence of calling Mr. Cleremont Cleremont, and it was all I could do to suppress the rebuke that was on my lips.

"If your father comes through for a thousand pounds, sir," continued he, "I'll say he's lucky. If Sir Roger would leave it to one person to give the orders, — I don't mean myself, — though by right it is my business; instead of that, there's the Captain sending for this, and Cleremont for the other, and you'll see there will be enough for three entertainments when it's all over. Could you just say a word to him, sir?"

"Not for the world, Nixon. Papa is very kind to me and good-natured, but I'll not risk any liberty with him; and what's more, I'd be right sorry to call Mr. Cleremont Cleremont before him, as you have done twice within the last five minutes."

"Lord bless you, Master Digby! I've known him these fifteen years. I knew him when he came out, just a boy like, to Lord Colthorpe's embassy. He and I is like pals."

"You have known *me* also as a boy, Nixon," said I, haughtily; "and yet, I promise you, I'll not permit you to speak of me as Norcott, when I am a man."

"No fear of that, sir, you may depend on't," said he, with humility; but there was a malicious twinkle in his eye, and a firm compression of the lip as he withdrew, that did not leave my mind the whole day after. Indeed, I recognized that his face had assumed the selfsame look of insolent familiarity it wore when he spoke of Cleremont.

The evening of that day was passed filling up the cards of invitation, — a process which amused me greatly, affording, as it did, a sort of current critique on the persons whose names came up for notice, and certainly, if I were to judge of their eligibility only by what I heard of their characters, I might well feel amazed why they were singled out for attentions. They were marquises and counts, however, chevaliers of various orders, grand cordons and "hautes charges," so that their trespasses or their shortcomings had all been enacted in the world of good society, and with each other as accomplices or victims. There were a number of contingencies, too, attached to almost every name. There must be high play for the Russian envoy, flirting for the French minister's wife, iced drinks for the Americans, and scandal and Ostend oysters for everybody. There was scarcely a good word for any one, and yet the most eager anxiety was expressed that they would all come. Immense precautions had been taken to fix a day when there was nothing going on at court or in the court circle. It was difficult to believe that pleasure could be planned with such heart-burning and bitterness. There was scarcely a detail that did not come associated with something that reflected on the morals or the manners of the dear friends we were entreating to honor us; and for the life of me I did not know why such pains were taken to secure the presence of people for whom none had a good wish nor a single kindly thought.

My father took very little part in the discussion; he sat there with a sort of proud indifference, as though the matter had little interest for him, and if a doubt were expressed as to the likelihood of this or that person's acceptance, he would superciliously break in with, "He 'll come, sir: I 'll answer for that. I have never yet played to empty benches."

This vain and haughty speech dwelt in my mind for many a day, and showed me how my father deemed that it was not his splendid style of living, his exquisite dinners, and his choice wines that drew guests around him, but his own especial qualities as host and entertainer.

"But that it involves the bore of an audience, I 'd ask the king; I could give him some Château d'Yquem very unlike his own, and such as, I 'll venture to say, he never tasted," said he, affectedly.

"So you are going to bring out the purple seal?" cried Cleremont.

"I might for royalty, sir; but not for such people as I read of in that list there."

"Why, here are two Dukes with their Duchesses, Marquises and Counts by the score, half-a-dozen ministers plenipotentiary, and a perfect cloud of chamberlains and court swells."

"They 'd cut a great figure, I 've no doubt, Hotham, on the quarter-deck of the 'Thunder Bomb,' where you eke out the defects of a bad band with a salute from your big guns, and give your guests the national anthem when they want champagne. Oh dear, there's no snob like a sailor!"

"Well, if they're not good enough for you, why the devil do you ask them?" cried Hotham, sturdily.

"Sir, if I were to put such a question to myself, I might shut up my house to-morrow!" And with this very uncourteous speech he arose and left the room.

We continued, however, to fill in the cards of invitation and address the envelopes, but with little inclination to converse, and none whatever to refer to what had passed.

"There," cried Cleremont, as he checked off the list. "That makes very close on seven hundred. I take it I may order supper for six hundred." Then turning half fiercely to me, he added: "Do you know, youngster, that all this tomfoolery is got up for *you?* It is by way of celebrating your birthday we're going to turn the house out of the windows!"

"I suppose my father has that right, sir."

"Of course he has, just as he would have the right to make a ruin of the place to-morrow if he liked it; but I don't fancy his friends would be the better pleased with him for his amiable eccentricity: your father pushes our regard for him very far sometimes."

"I'll tell him to be more cautious, sir, in future," said I, moving towards the door.

"Do so," said he. "Good-night."

I had scarcely taken my bedroom candle when I felt a hand on my shoulder: I turned and saw Madame Cleremont standing very pale and in great agitation at my side. "Oh, Digby," said she, "don't make that man your enemy whatever you do; he is more than a match for you, poor child!" She was about to say more when we heard voices in the corridor, and she hurried away and left me.

CHAPTER XI.

A BIRTHDAY DINNER.

THE eventful day arrived at last, and now, as I write, I can bring up before me the whole of that morning, so full of exciting sensations and of pleasurable surprises. I wandered about from room to room, never sated with the splendors around me. Till then I had not seen the gorgeous furniture uncovered, nor had I the faintest idea of the beauty and richness of the silk hangings, or the glittering elegance of those lustres of pure Venetian glass. Perhaps nothing, however, astonished me so much as the array of gold and silver plate in the dining-room. Our every-day dinners had been laid out with what had seemed to me a most costly elegance; but what were they to this display of splendid centrepieces and massive cups and salvers large as shields! Of flowers, the richest and rarest, wagon-loads poured in; and at last I saw the horses taken out, and carts full of carnations and geraniums left unloaded in the stable-yard. Ice, too, came in the same profusion: those squarely cut blocks, bright as crystal, and hollowed out to serve as wine-coolers, and take their place amidst the costlier splendors of gold and silver.

It is rare to hear the servant class reprove profusion; but here I overheard many a comment on the reckless profligacy of outlay which had provided for this occasion enough for a dozen such. It was easy to see, they said, that Mr. Clerement did not pay; and this sneer sunk deep into my mind, increasing the dislike I already felt for him.

Nor was it the house alone was thus splendidly prepared for reception; but kiosks and tents were scattered through the grounds, in each of which, as if by magic, supper could be served on the instant. Upwards of thirty additional servants were engaged, all of whom were dressed in our state livery, white, with silver epaulettes, and the Norcott crest embroidered on the arm. These had been duly drilled by Mr. Cleremont, and were not, he said, to be distinguished by the most critical eye from the rest of the household.

Though there was movement everywhere, and everywhere activity, there was little or no confusion. Cleremont was an adept in organization, and already his skill and cleverness had spread discipline through the mass. He was a despot, however, would not permit the slightest interference with his functions, nor accept a suggestion from any one. "Captain Hotham gives no orders here," I heard him say; and when standing under my window, and I am almost sure seeing me, he said, "Master Digby has nothing to do with the arrangements any more than yourself."

I had determined that day to let nothing irritate or vex me; that I would give myself up to unmixed enjoyment, and make this birthday a memorable spot in life, to look back on with undiluted delight. I could have been more certain to carry out this resolve if I could only have seen and spoken with Madame Cleremont; but she did not leave her room the whole day. A distinguished hairdresser had arrived with a mysterious box early in the morning, and after passing two hours engaged with her, had returned for more toilet requirements. In fact, from the coming and going of maids and dressmakers, it was evident that the preparations of beauty were fully equal to those that were being made by cooks and confectioners.

My father, too, was invisible; his breakfast was served in his own room; and when Cleremont wished to communicate with him, he had to do so in writing: and these little notes passed unceasingly between them till late in the afternoon.

"What 's up now?" I heard Hotham say, as Cleremont tore up a note in pieces and flung the fragments from him with impatience.

"Just like him. I knew exactly how it would be," cried the other. "He sent a card of invitation to the Duc de Bredar without first making a visit; and here comes the Duc's chasseur to say that his Excellency has not the honor of knowing the gentleman who has been so gracious as to ask him to dinner."

"Norcott will have him out for the impertinence," said Hotham.

"And what will that do? Will the shooting him or the being shot make this dinner go off as we meant it, eh? Is that for me, Nixon? Give it here." He took a note as he spoke, and tore it open. "'La Marquise de Carnac is engaged,' not a word more. The world is certainly progressing in politeness. Three cards came back this day with the words 'Sent by mistake' written on them. Norcott does not know it yet, nor shall he till to-morrow."

"Is it true that the old Countess de Joievillars begged to know who was to receive the ladies invited?"

"Yes, it is true; and I told her a piece of her own early history in return, to assure her that no accident of choice should be any bar to the hope of seeing her."

"What was the story?"

"I'd tell it if that boy of Norcott's was not listening there at that window."

"Yes, sir," cried I; "I have heard every word, and mean to repeat it to my father when I see him."

"Tell him at the same time, then, that his grand dinner of twenty-eight has now come down to seventeen, and I'm not fully sure of three of these."

I went down into the dining-room, and saw that places had been laid for twenty-eight, and as yet no alteration had been made in the table, so that it at once occurred to me this speech of Cleremont's was a mere impertinence, — one of those insolent sallies he was so fond of. Nixon, too, had placed the name of each guest on his napkin, and he, at least, had not heard of any apologies.

Given in my honor, as this dinner was, I felt a most intense interest in its success. I was standing, as it were, on the threshold of life, and regarded the mode in which I should be received as an augury of good or evil. My father's supremacy at home, the despotism he wielded, and the respect and deference he exacted, led me to infer that he exercised the same influence on the world at large; and that, as I had often heard, the only complaint against him in society was his exclusiveness. I canvassed these thoughts with myself for hours, as I sat alone in my room waiting till it was time to dress.

At last eight o'clock struck, and I went down into the drawing-room. Hotham was there, in a window recess, conversing in whispers with an Italian count, — one of our intimates, but of whom I knew nothing. They took no notice of me, so that I took up a paper and began to read. Cleremont came in soon after with a bundle of notes in his hand. "Has your father come down?" asked he, hastily; and then, without waiting for my reply, he turned and left the room. Madame next appeared. I have no words for my admiration of her, as, splendidly dressed and glittering with diamonds, she swept proudly in. That her beauty could have been so heightened by mere toilette seemed incredible, and as she read my wonderment in my face she smiled, and said: —

"Yes, Digby, I am looking my very best to *fête* your birthday."

I would have liked to have told her how lovely she appeared to me, but I could only blush and gaze wonderingly on her.

"Button this glove, dear," said she, handing to me her wrist all weighted and jingling with costly bracelets; and while, with trembling fingers, I was trying to obey her, my father entered and came towards us. He made her a low but very distant bow, tapped me familiarly on the shoulder, and then moved across to an arm-chair and sat down.

Cleremont now came in, and, drawing a chair beside my father's, leaned over and said something in a whisper. Not seeming to attend to what he was saying, my father snatched, rather than took, the bundle of letters he held in his hand, ran his eyes eagerly over some of them, and then, crushing the mass in his grasp, he threw it into the fire.

"It is forty minutes past eight," said he, calmly, but with a deadly pallor in his face. "Can any one tell me if that clock be right?"

"It is eight or ten minutes slow," said Hotham.

"Whom do we wait for, Cleremont?" asked my father again.

"Steinmetz was *de service* with the King, but would come if he got free; and there's Rochegude, the French Secretary, was to replace his chief. I'm not quite sure about the Walronds, but Craydon told me positively to expect *him*."

"Do me the favor to ring the bell and order dinner," said my father; and he spoke with measured calm.

"Won't you wait a few minutes?" whispered Cleremont. "The Duke de Frialmont, I'm sure, will be here."

"No, sir; we live in a society that understands and observes punctuality. No breach of it is accidental. Dinner, Nixon!" added he, as the servant appeared.

The folding-doors were thrown wide almost at once, and dinner announced. My father gave his arm to Madame Cleremont, who actually tottered as she walked beside him, and as she sat down seemed on the verge of fainting. Just as we took our places, three young men, somewhat overdressed, entered hurriedly, and were proceeding to make their apologies for being late; but my father, with a chilling distance, assured them they were in excellent time, and motioned them to be seated.

Of the table laid for twenty-eight guests, nine places were occupied; and these, by some mischance, were scattered here and there with wide intervals. Madame Cleremont sat on my father's right, and three empty places flanked his left hand.

I sat opposite my father, with two vacant seats on either side of me; Hotham nearest to me, and one of the strangers beside him. They conversed in a very low tone, but short snatches and half sentences reached me; and I heard the stranger say, "It was too bold a step; women are sure to resent such attempts." Madame Cleremont's name, too, came up three or four times; and the stranger said, "It's my first dinner here, and the Bredars will not forgive me for coming."

"Well, there's none of them has such a cook as Norcott," said Hotham.

"I quite agree with you; but I'd put up with a worse dinner for better company."

I looked round at this to show I had heard the remark, and from that time they conversed in a whisper.

My father never uttered a word during the dinner. I do not know if he ate, but he helped himself and affected to eat. As for Madame, how she sat out those long two hours, weak and fainting as she was, I cannot tell. I saw her once try to lift her glass to her lips, but her hand trembled so, she set it down untasted, and lay back in her chair, like one dying out of exhaustion.

A few words and a faint attempt to laugh once or twice broke the dead silence of the entertainment, which proceeded, however, in all its stately detail, course after course, till the dessert was handed round, and Tokay, in small gilt glasses, was served; then my father rose slowly, and, drawing himself up to his full height, looked haughtily around him. "May I ask my illustrious friends," said he, "who have this day so graciously honored me with their presence, to drink the health of my son, whose birthday we celebrate. There is no happier augury on entering life than to possess the friendship and good-will of those who stand foremost in the world's honor. It is his great privilege to be surrounded this day by beauty and by distinction. The great in the arts of peace and war, and that loveliness which surpasses in its fascination all other rewards, are around me, and I call upon these to drink to the health of Digby Norcott."

All rose and drank; Hotham lifted his glass high in air and tried a cheer, but none joined him; his voice died away, and he sat down; and for several minutes an unbroken silence prevailed.

My father at last leaned over towards Madame, and I heard the word "coffee." She arose and took his arm, and we all followed them to the drawing-room.

"I'm right glad it's over," said Hotham, as he poured his brandy over his coffee. "I've sat out a court-martial that wasn't slower than that dinner."

"But what's the meaning of it all?" asked another. "Why and how came all these apologies?"

"You'd better ask Cleremont, or rather his wife," muttered Hotham, and moved away.

"You ought to get into the open air; that's the best thing for you," I heard Cleremont say to his wife; but there was such a thorough indifference in the tone, it sounded less like a kindness than a sarcasm. She, however, drew a shawl around her, and moved down the steps into the garden. My father soon after retired to his own room, and Cleremont laughingly said, "There are no women here, and we may have a cigar;" and he threw his case across the table. The whole party were soon immersed in smoke.

I saw that my presence imposed some restraint on the conversation, and soon sought my room with a much sadder spirit and a heavier heart than I had left it two hours before.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BALL.

Musing and thinking and fretting together, I had fallen asleep on my sofa, and was awakened by Mr. Nixon lighting my candles, and asking me, in a very mild voice, if I felt unwell.

"No, nothing of the kind."

"Won't you go down, sir, then? It's past eleven now, and there's a good many people below."

"Who have come?" asked I, eagerly.

"Well, sir," said he, with a certain degree of hesitation, "they're not much to talk about. There's eight or nine young gentlemen of the embassies — attachés like — and there's fifteen or twenty officers of the Guides, and there's some more that look like travellers out of the hotels; they ain't in evening-dress."

"Are there no ladies?"

"Yes; I suppose we must call them ladies, sir. There's Madame Rigault and her two daughters."

"The pastrycook?"

"Yes, sir; and there are the Demoiselles Janson, of the cigar-shop, and stunningly dressed they are too! Amber satin with black lace, and Spanish veils on their heads. And there's that little Swedish girl — I believe she's a Swede — that sells the iced drinks."

"But what do you mean? These people have not been invited. How have they come here?"

"Well, sir, I must n't tell you a lie; but I hope you'll not betray me if I speak in confidence to you. Here's how it all has happened. The swells all refused: they agreed together that they'd not come to dinner, nor come in the evening. Mr. Cleremont knows why; but it ain't for me to say it."

"But *I* don't know, and I desire to know!" cried I, haughtily.

"Well, indeed, sir, it 's more than I can tell you. There 's people here not a bit correcter than herself that won't meet her."

"Meet whom?"

"Madame, sir, — Madame Cleremont."

"Don't dare to say another word," cried I, passionately. "If you utter a syllable of disrespect to that name, I 'll fling you out of the window."

"Don't be afraid, Master Digby, I know my station, and I never forget it, sir. I was only telling you what you asked me, not a word more. The swells sent back your father's cards, and there 's more than three hundred of them returned."

"And where 's papa now?"

"In bed, sir. He told his valet he was n't to be disturbed, except the house took fire."

"Is Madame Cleremont below?"

"No, sir; she 's very ill. The doctor has been with her, and he 's coming again to-night."

"And are these people — this rabble that you talk of — received as my papa's guests?"

"Only in a sort of a way, sir," said he, smiling. "You see that when Mr. Cleremont perceived that there was nothing but excuses and apologies pouring in, he told me to close the house, and that we 'd let all the bourgeois people into the grounds, and give them a jolly supper and plenty of champagne; and he sent word to a many of the young officers to come up and have a lark; and certainly, as the supper was there, they might as well eat it. The only puzzle is now, won't there be too many, for he sent round to all Sir Roger's tradespeople, — all at least that has good-looking daughters, — and they 're pourin' in by tens and fifteens, and right well dressed and well got up too."

"And what will papa say to all this to-morrow?"

"Don't you know, sir, that Sir Roger seldom looks back," said he, with a cunning look; "he 'll not be disturbed to-night, for the house is shut up, and the bands are playing, one at the lake, the other at the end of the long walk, and the suppers will be served here and there, where they can cheer and drink toasts without annoying any one."

"It's a downright infamy!" cried I.

"It ain't the correct thing, sure enough, sir, there's none of us could say that, but it will be rare fun; and, as Captain Hotham said, "the women are a precious sight better looking than the countesses.'"

"Where is Mr. Eccles?"

"I saw him waltzing, sir, or maybe it was the polka, with Madame Robineau just as I was coming up to you."

"I'll go down and tell Mr. Cleremont to dismiss his friends," cried I, boiling over with anger. "Papa meant this *fête* to celebrate my birthday. I'll not accept such rabble congratulations. If Mr. Cleremont must have an orgie, let him seek for another place to give it in."

"Don't go, master, don't, I entreat you," cried he, imploringly. "You'll only make a row, sir, and bring down Sir Roger, and then who's to say what will happen? He'll have a dozen duels on his hands in half as many minutes. The officers won't stand being called to account, and Sir Roger is not the man to be sweet-tempered with them."

"And am I to see my father's name insulted, and his house dishonored by such a canaille crew as this?"

"Just come down and see them, Master Digby; prettier, nicer girls you never saw in your life, and pretty behaved, too. Ask Mr. Eccles if he ever mixed with a nicer company. There, now, sir, slip on your velvet jacket, — it looks nicer than that tail-coat, — and come down. They'll be all proud and glad to see you, and won't she hold her head high that you ask to take a turn of a waltz with you!"

"And how should I face my father to-morrow?" said I, blushing deeply.

"Might I tell you a secret, Master Digby?" said he, leaning over the table, and speaking almost in my ear.

"Go on," said I, dryly.

"I know well, sir, you'll never throw me over, and what I'm going to tell you is worth gold to you."

"Go on," cried I, for he had ceased to speak.

"Here it is, then," said he, with an effort. "The greatest sorrow your father has, Master Digby, is that he thinks you have no spirit in you, — that you 're a mollyçot. As he said one day to Mr. Cleremont, ' You must teach him everything, he has no "go" in himself; there 's nothing in his nature but what somebody else put into it.' "

"He never said that!"

"I pledge you my oath he did."

"Well, if he did, he meant it very differently from what you do."

"There 's no two meanings to it. There 's a cheer!" cried he, running over to the window and flinging it wide. "I wonder who 's come now? Oh, it 's the fireworks are beginning."

"I 'll go down," said I; but out of what process of reasoning came that resolve I am unable to tell.

"Maybe they won't be glad to see you!" cried he, as he helped me on with my jacket and arranged the heron's feathers in my velvet cap. I was half faltering in my resolution, when I bethought me of that charge of feebleness of character Nixon had reported to me, and I determined, come what might, I would show that I had a will and could follow it. In less than five minutes after, I was standing under the trees in the garden, shaking hands with scores of people I never saw before, and receiving the very politest of compliments and good wishes from very pretty lips, aided by very expressive eyes.

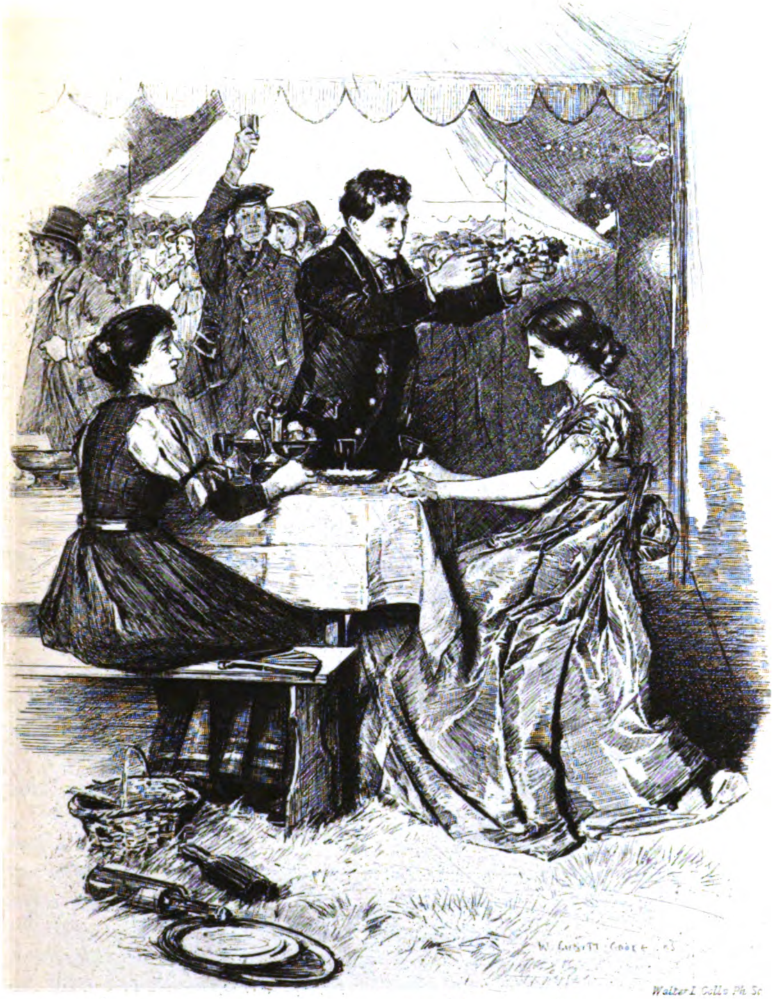
"Here 's Mademoiselle Pauline Delorme refuses to dance with me," cried Eccles, "since she has seen the head of the house. Digby, let me present you." And with this he led me up to a very beautiful girl, who, though only the daughter of a celebrated restaurateur of Brussels, might have been a princess, so far as look and breeding and elegance were concerned.

"This is to be the correct thing," cried Cleremont. "We open with a quadrille; take your partners, gentlemen, and to your places."

Nothing could be more perfectly proper and decorous than this dance. It is possible, perhaps, that we exceeded a little on the score of reverential observances: we bowed and courtesied at every imaginable opportunity, and with an air of homage that smacked of a court; and if we did raise our eyes to each other, as we recovered from the obeisance, it was with a look of the softest and most subdued deference. I really began to think that the only hoydenish people I had ever seen were ladies and gentlemen. As for Eccles, he wore an air of almost reverential gravity, and Hotham was sternly composed. At last, however, we came to the finish, and Cleremont, clapping his hands thrice, called out "*grand rond*," and, taking his partner's arm within his own, led off at a galop; the music striking up one of Strauss's wildest, quickest strains. Away he went down an alley, and we all after him, stamping and laughing like mad. The sudden revulsion from the quiet of the moment before was electric; no longer arm-in-arm, but with arms close clasped around the waist, away we went over the smooth turf with a wild delight to which the music imparted a thrilling ecstasy. Now through the dense shade we broke into a blaze of light, where a great buffet stood; and round this we all swarmed at once, and glasses were filled with champagne, and vivas shouted again and again, and I heard that my health was toasted, and a very sweet voice — the lips were on my ear — whispered I know not what, but it sounded very like wishing me joy and love, while others were deafening me about long life and happiness.

I do not remember — I do not want to remember — all the nonsense I talked, and with a volubility quite new to me; my brain felt on fire with a sort of wild ecstasy, and as homage and deference met me at every step, my every wish acceded to, and each fancy that struck me hailed at once as bright inspiration, no wonder was it if I lost myself in a perfect ocean of bliss. I told Pauline she should be the queen of the *fête*, and ordered a splendid wreath of flowers to be brought, which I placed upon her brow, and saluted her with her title, amidst the cheering shouts of willing toasters. Except to make a tour of a waltz or a polka with some one I knew, I would not permit her to dance with any but myself; and she, I must say, most graciously submitted to the tyranny, and seemed to delight in the extravagant expressions of my admiration for her.

If I was madly jealous of her, I felt the most overwhelm-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Walter L. Colls Ph. Sc

I ordered a splendid wreath of flowers to be brought, which I placed on her brow.

ing delight in the praises bestowed upon her beauty and her gracefulness. Perhaps the consciousness that I was a mere boy, and that thus a freedom might be used towards me that would have been reprehensible with one older, led her to treat me with a degree of intimacy that was positively captivating; and before our third waltz was over, I was calling her Pauline, and she calling me Digby, like old friends.

"Is n't that boy of Norcott's going it to-night?" I heard a man say as I swung past in a polka, and I turned fiercely to catch the speaker's eye, and show him I meant to call him to book.

"Eh, Eccles, your pupil is a credit to you!" cried another.

"I 'm a Dutchman if that fellow does n't rival his father."

"He 'll be far and away beyond him," muttered another; "for he has none of Norcott's crotchets, — he 's a scamp 'pur et simple.'"

"Where are you breaking away from me, Digby?" said Pauline, as I tried to shake myself free of her.

"I want to follow those men. I have a word to say to them."

"You shall do no such thing, dearest," muttered she. "You have just told me I am to be your little wife, and I 'm not going to see my husband rushing into a stupid quarrel."

"And you are mine, then," cried I, "and you will wear this ring as a betrothal? Come, let me take off your glove."

"That will do, Digby; that 's quite enough for courtesy and a little too much for deference," whispered Eccles in my ear; for I was kissing her hand about a hundred times over, and she laughing at my raptures as an excellent joke. "I think you 'd better lead the way to supper."

Secretly resolving that I would soon make very short work of Mr. Eccles and his admonitions, I gave him a haughty glance and moved on. I remember very little more than that I walked to the head of the table and placed Pauline on my right. I know I made some absurd speech in return for their drinking my health, and spoke of *us*, and what *we* — Pauline and myself — felt, and with what pleasure we should see our friends often around us, and a deal of that tawdry trash that comes into a brain addled with noise and heated with wine. I was frequently interrupted; uproarious cheers at one moment would break forth, but still louder laughter would ring out and convulse the whole assembly. Even addled and confused as I was, I could see that some were my partisans and friends, who approved of all I said, and wished me to give a free course to my feelings; and there were others — two or three — who tried to stop me; and one actually said aloud, "If that boy of Norcott's is not suppressed, we shall have no supper."

Recalled to my dignity as a host by this impertinence, I believe I put some restraint on my eloquence, and I now addressed myself to do the honors of the table. Alas, my attentions seldom strayed beyond my lovely neighbor, and I firmly believed that none could remark the rapture with which I gazed on her, or as much as suspected that I had never quitted the grasp of her hand from the moment we sat down.

"I suspect you 'd better let Mademoiselle dance the cotillon with the Count Vauglas," whispered Eccles in my ear.

"And why, sir?" rejoined I, half fiercely.

"I think you might guess," said he, with a smile; "at least, you could if you were to get up."

"And would she — would Pauline — I mean, would Mademoiselle Delorme — approve of this arrangement?"

"No, Monsieur Digby, not if it did not come from you. We shall sit in the shade yonder for half an hour or so, and then, when you are rested, we 'll join the cotillon."

"Get that boy off to bed, Eccles," said Cleremont, who did not scruple to utter the words aloud.

I started up to make an indignant rejoinder; some fierce insult was on my lips; but passion and excitement and wine mastered me, and I sank back on my seat overcome and senseless.

CHAPTER XIII.

A NEXT MORNING.

I COULD not awake on the day after the *fête*. I was conscious that Nixon was making a considerable noise, — that he shut and opened doors and windows, splashed the water into my bath, and threw down my boots with an unwonted energy; but through all this consciousness of disturbance I slept on, and was determined to sleep, let him make what uproar he pleased.

"It 's nigh two o'clock, sir!" whispered he in my ear, and I replied by a snort.

"I 'm very sorry to be troublesome, sir; but the master is very impatient: he was getting angry when I went in last time."

These words served to dispel my drowsiness at once, and the mere thought of my father's displeasure acted on me like a strong stimulant.

"Does papa want me?" cried I, sitting up in bed; "did you say papa wanted me?"

"Yes, sir," said a deep voice; and my father entered the room, dressed for the street, and with his hat on.

"You may leave us," said he to Nixon; and as the man withdrew, my father took a chair and sat down close to my bedside.

"I have sent three messages to you this morning," said he, gravely, "and am forced at last to come myself."

I was beginning my apologies, when he stopped me, and said, "That will do; I have no wish to be told why you overslept yourself; indeed, I have already heard more on that score than I care for."

He paused, and though perhaps he expected me to say something, I was too much terrified to speak.

"I perceive," said he, "you understand me; you apprehend that I know of your doings of last night, and that any attempt at excuse is hopeless. I have not come here to reproach you for your misconduct; I reproach myself for a mistaken estimate of you; I ought to have known — and if you had been a horse I would have known — that your cross-breeding would tell on you. The bad drop was sure to betray itself. I will not dwell on this, nor have I time. Your conduct last night makes my continued residence here impossible. I cannot continue in a city where my tradespeople have become my guests, and where the honors of my house have been extended to my tailor and my butcher. I shall leave this, therefore, as soon as I can conclude my arrangements to sell this place: you must quit it at once. Eccles will be ready to start with you this evening for the Rhine, and then for the interior of Germany, — I suspect Weimar will do. He will be paymaster, and you will conform to his wishes strictly as regards expense. Whether you study or not, whether you employ your time profitably and creditably, or whether you pass it in indolence, is a matter that completely regards yourself. As for me, my conscience is acquitted when I provide you with the means of acquirement, and I no more engage you to benefit by these advantages than I do to see you eat the food that is placed before you. The compact that unites us enjoins distinct duties from each. You need not write to me till I desire you to do so; and when I think it proper we should meet, I will tell you."

If, while he spoke these harsh words to me, the slightest touch of feeling — had one trace of even sorrow crossed his face, my whole heart would have melted at once, and I would have thrown myself at his feet for forgiveness. There was, however, a something so pitiless in his tone, and a look so full of scorn in his steadfast eye, that every sentiment of pride within me — that same pride I inherited from himself — stimulated me to answer him, and I said boldly: "If the people I saw here last night were not as well born as your habitual guests, sir, I'll venture to say there was nothing in their manner or deportment to be ashamed of."

"I am told that Mademoiselle Pauline Delorme was charming," said he; and the sarcasm of his glance covered me with shame and confusion. He had no need to say more: I could not utter a word.

"This is a topic I will not discuss with you, sir," said he, after a pause. "*I* intended you to be a gentleman, and to live with gentlemen. *Your* tastes incline differently, and I make no opposition to them. As I have told you already, I was willing to launch you into life; I 'll not engage to be your pilot. Any interest I take or could take in you must be the result of your own qualities. These have not impressed me strongly up to this; and were I to judge by what I have seen, I should send you back to those you came from."

"Do so, then, if it will only give me back the nature I brought away with me!" cried I, passionately; and my throat swelled till I felt almost choked with emotion.

"That nature," said he, with a sneer on the word, "was costumed, if I remember right, in a linen blouse and a pair of patched shoes; and I believe they have been preserved along with some other family relics."

I bethought me at once of the tower and its humble furniture, and a sense of terror overcame me, that I was in presence of one who could cherish hate with such persistence.

"The fumes of your last night's debauch are some excuse for your bad manners, sir," said he, rising. "I leave you to sleep them off; only remember that the train starts at eight this evening, and it is my desire you do not miss it."

With this he left me. I arose at once and began to dress. It was a slow proceeding, for I would often stop, and sit down to think what course would best befit me to take at this moment. At one instant it seemed to me I ought to follow him, and declare that the splendid slavery in which I lived had no charm for me, — that the faintest glimmering of self-respect and independence was more my ambition than all the luxuries that surrounded me; and when I had resolved I would do this, a sudden dread of his presence, — his eye that I could never face without shrinking, — the tones of his voice that smote me like a lash, — so abashed me that I gave up the effort with despair.

Might he not consent to give me some pittance — enough to save her from the burden of my support — and send me back to my mother? Oh, if I could summon courage to ask this! This assistance need be continued only for a few years, for I hoped and believed I should not always have to live as a dependant. What if I were to write him a few lines to this purport? I could do this even better than speak it.

I sat down at once and began: —

"Dear papa," — he would never permit me to use a more endearing word. "Dear papa, I hope you will forgive me troubling you about myself and my future. I would like to fit myself for some career or calling by which I might become independent. I could work very hard and study very closely if I were back with my mother."

As I reached this far, the door opened, and Eccles appeared.

"All right!" cried he; "I was afraid I should catch you in bed still, and I 'm glad you 're up and preparing for the road. Are you nearly ready?"

"Not quite; I wanted to write a letter before I go. I was just at it."

"Write from Verviers or Bonn; you 'll have lots of time on the road."

"Ay, but my letter might save me from the journey if I sent it off now."

He looked amazed at this, and I at once told him my plan and showed him what I had written.

"You don't mean to say you 'd have courage to send this to your father?"

"And why not?"

"Well, all I have to say is, don't do it till I 'm off the premises; for I 'd not be here when he reads it for a trifle. My dear Digby," said he, with a changed tone, "you don't know Sir Roger; you don't know the violence of his temper if he imagines himself what he calls outraged, which sometimes means questioned. Take your hat and stick, and go seek your fortune, in Heaven's name, if you must; but don't set out on your life's journey with a curse or a kick, or possibly both. If I preach patience, my dear boy, I have had to practise it too. Put up your traps in your portmanteau; come down and take some dinner: we'll start with the night-train; and take my word for it, we'll have a jolly ramble and enjoy ourselves heartily. If I know anything of life, it is that there's no such mistake in the world as hunting up annoyances. Let them find us if they can, but let us never run after them."

"My heart is too heavy for such enjoyment as you talk of."

"It won't be so to-morrow, or, at all events, the day after. Come, stir yourself now with your packing; a thought has just struck me that you'll be very grateful to me for, when I tell it you."

"What is it?" asked I, half carelessly.

"You must ask with another guess-look in your eye if you expect me to tell you."

"You could tell me nothing that would gladden me."

"Nor propose anything that you'd like?" asked he.

"Nor that, either," said I, despondingly.

"Oh, if that be the case, I give up my project; not that it was much of a project, after all. What I was going to suggest was that instead of dining here we should put our traps into a cab, and drive down to Delorme's and have a pleasant little dinner there, in the garden; it's quite close to the railroad, so that we could start at the last whistle."

"That does sound pleasantly," said I; "there's nothing more irksome in its way than hanging about a station waiting for departure."

"So, then, you agree?" cried he, with a malicious twinkle in his eye that I affected not to understand.

"Yes," said I, indolently; "I see little against it; and if nothing else, it saves me a leave-taking with Captain Hotham and Cleremont."

"By the way, you are not to ask to see Madame; your father reminded me to tell you this. The doctors say she is not to be disturbed on any account. What a chance that I did not forget this!"

Whether it was that I was too much concerned for my own misfortunes to have a thought that was not selfish, or that another leave-taking that loomed in the distance was uppermost in my thoughts, certain it is, I felt this privation far less acutely than I might.

"She 's a nice little woman, and deserves a better lot than she has met with."

"What sort of dinner will Delorme give us?" said I, affecting the air of a man about town, but in reality throwing out the bait to lead the talk in that direction.

"First-rate, if we let him; that is, if we only say, 'Order dinner for us, Monsieur Pierre.' There 's no man understands such a mandate more thoroughly."

"Then that 's what I shall say," cried I, "as I cross his threshold."

"He 'll serve you Madeira with your soup, and Steinberger with your fish, thirty francs a bottle, each of them."

"Be it so. We shall drink to our pleasant journey," said I; and I actually thought my voice had caught the tone and cadence of my father's as I spoke.

CHAPTER XIV.

A GOOD-BYE.

While I strolled into the garden to select a table for our dinner, Eccles went in search of Mr. Delorme; and though he had affected to say that the important duty of devising the feast should be confided to the host, I could plainly see that my respected tutor accepted his share in that high responsibility.

I will only say of the feast in question, that, though I was daily accustomed to the admirable dinners of my father's table, I had no conception of what exquisite devices in cookery could be produced by the skill of an accomplished restaurateur, left free to his own fancy, and without limitation as to the bill.

One thing alone detracted from the perfect enjoyment of the banquet. It was the appearance of Mr. Delorme himself, white-cravated and gloved, carrying in the soup. It was an attention that he usually reserved for great personages, royalties, or high dignitaries of the court; and I was shocked that he should have selected me for the honor, not the less as it was only a few hours before he and I had been drinking champagne with much clinking of glasses together, and interchanging the most affectionate vows of eternal friendship.

I arose from my chair to salute him; but, as he deposited the tureen upon the table, he stepped back and bowed low, and retreated in this fashion, with the same humble reverence at every step, till he was lost in the distance.

"Sit down," said Eccles, with a peculiar look, as though to warn me that I was forgetting my dignity; and then, to divert my attention, he added, "That green seal is an attention Delorme offers you, — a very rare favor, too, — a bottle of his own peculiar Johannisberg. Let us drink his health. Now, Digby, I call this something very nigh perfection."

It was a theme my tutor understood thoroughly, and there was not a dish nor a wine that he did not criticise.

"I was always begging your father to take this cook, Digby," said he, with a half sigh. "Even with a first-rate artist you need change, otherwise your dinners become manneristic, as ours have become of late."

He then went on to show me that the domestic cook, always appealing to the small public of the family, gets narrowed in his views and bounded in his resources. He compared them, I remember, to the writers in certain religious newspapers, who must always go on spicing higher and higher as the palates of their clients grow more jaded. How he worked out his theme afterwards I cannot tell, for I was watching the windows of the house, and stealing glances down the alleys in the garden, longing for one look, ever so fleeting, of my lovely partner of the night before.

"I see, young gentleman," said he, evidently nettled at my inattention, "your thoughts are not with me."

"How long have we to stay, sir?" said I, reverting to the respect I tendered him at my lessons.

"You have thirty-eight minutes," said he, examining his watch: "which I purpose to apportion in this wise, — eight for the douceur, five for the cheese, fifteen for the dessert, five for coffee and a glass of curaçoa. The bill and our parting compliments will take the rest, giving us three minutes to walk across to the station."

These sort of pedantries were a passion with him, and I did not interpose a word as he spoke.

"What a pineapple!" cried a young fellow from an adjoining table, as a waiter deposited a magnificent pine in the midst of the bouquet that adorned our table.

"Monsieur Delorme begs to say, sir, this has just arrived from Laeken."

"Don't you know who that is?" said a companion, in a low voice; but my hearing, ever acute, caught the words, "He's that boy of Norcott's."

I started as if I had received a blow. It was time to resent these insolences, and make an end of them forever.

"You heard what that man yonder has called me?" said I to Eccles.

"No; I was not minding him."

"The old impertinence, — 'That boy of Norcott's.'"

I arose, and took the cane I had laid against a chair. What I was about to do I knew not. I felt I should launch some insolent provocation. As for what should follow, the event might decide *that.*

"I 'd not mind him, Digby," said Eccles, carelessly, as he lit his cigarette, and stretched his legs on a vacant chair. I took no notice of his words, but walked on. Before, however, I had made three steps my eyes caught the flutter of a dress at the end of the alley. It was merely the last folds of some floating muslin, but it was enough to rout all other thoughts from my head, and I flew down the walk with lightning speed. I was right; it was Pauline. In an instant I was beside her.

"Dearest, darling Pauline," I cried, seizing her round the waist and kissing her cheek, before she well knew, "how happy it makes me to see you even for a few seconds."

"Ah, milord, I did not expect to see you here," said she, half distantly.

"I am not milord; I am your own Digby — Digby Norcott, who loves you, and will make you his wife."

"Ma foi! children don't marry, — at least demoiselles don't marry them," said she, with a saucy laugh.

"I am no more an 'enfant,'" said I, with a passionate stress on the word, "than I was last night, when you never left my arm except to sit at my side at supper."

"But you are going away," said she, pouting; "else why that travelling-dress, and that sack strapped at your side?"

"Only for a few weeks. A short tour up the Rhine, Pauline, to see the world, and complete my education; and then I will come back and marry you, and you shall be mistress of a beautiful house, and have everything you can think of."

"Vrai?" asked she, with a little laugh.

"I swear it by this kiss."

"Pardie, Monsieur? you are very adventurous," said she, repulsing me; "you will make me not regret that you are going so soon."

"Oh, Pauline! when you know that I adore you, that I only value wealth to share it with you; that all I ask of life is to devote it to you."

"And that you have n't got full thirty seconds left for that admirable object," broke in Eccles. "We must run for it like fury, boy, or we shall be late."

"I 'll not go."

"Then I 'll be shot if I stay here and meet your father," said he, turning away.

"Oh, Pauline, dearest, dearest of my heart!" I sobbed out, as I fell upon her neck; and the vile bell of the railway rang out with its infernal discord as I clasped her to my heart.

"Come along, and confound you," cried Eccles; and with a porter on one side and Eccles on the other, I was hurried along down the garden, across a road, and along a platform, where the station-master, wild with passion, stamped and swore in a very different mood from that in which he smiled at me across the supper-table the night before.

"We 're waiting for that boy of Norcott's, I vow," said an old fellow with a gray moustache; and I marked him out for future recognition.

Unlike my first journey, where all seemed confusion, trouble, and annoyance, I now saw only pleasant faces, and people bent on enjoyment. We were on the great tourist road of Europe, and it seemed as though every one was bound on some errand of amusement. Eccles, too, was a pleasant contrast to the courier who took charge of me on my first journey. Nothing could be more genial than his manner. He treated me with a perfect equality, and by that greatest of all flatteries to one of my age, induced me to believe that I was actually companionable to himself.

I will not pretend that he was an instructive companion.

He had neither knowledge of history nor feeling for art, and rather amused himself with sneering at both, and quizzing such of our fellow-travellers as the practice was safe with. But he was always gay, always in excellent spirits, ready to make light of the passing annoyances of the road, and, as he said himself, he always carried a quart-bottle of condensed sunshine with him against a rainy day; and, of my own knowledge, I can say his supply seemed inexhaustible.

His cheery manner, his bright good looks, and his invariable good-humor won upon every one, and the sourest and least genial people thawed into some show of warmth under his contagious pleasantry.

He did not care in what direction we went, and would have left it entirely to me to decide, had I been able to determine. All he stipulated for was: "No barbarism, no Oberland or glacier humbug. No Saxon Switzerland abominations. So long as we travel in a crowd, and meet good cookery every day, you'll find me charming."

Into this philosophy he inducted me. "Make life pleasant, Digby; never go in search of annoyances. Duns and disagreeables will come of themselves, and it's no bad fun dodging them. It's only a fool ever keeps their company."

A more shameless immorality might have revolted me, but this peddling sort of wickedness, this half-jesting with right and wrong, — giving to morals the aspect of a game in which a certain kind of address was practicable, — was very seductive to one of my age and temper. I fancied, too, that I was becoming a consummate man of the world, and his praises of my proficiency were unsparingly bestowed.

Attaching ourselves to this or that party of travellers, we would go off here or there, in any direction, for four or five days; and though I usually found myself growing fond of those I became more intimate with, and sorry to part from them, Eccles invariably wearied of the pleasantest people after a day or two. Incessant change seemed essential to him, and his nature and his spirits flagged when denied it.

What I least liked about him, however, was a habit he had of "trotting" me out — his own name for it — before strangers. My knowledge of languages, my skill at games, my little musical talents, he would parade in a way that I found positively offensive. Nor was this all, for I found he represented me as the son of a man of immense wealth and of a rank commensurate with his fortune.

One must have gone through the ordeal of such a representation to understand its vexations, to know all the impertinences it can evoke from some, all the slavish attentions from others. I feel a hot flush of shame on my cheek now, after long years, as I think of the mortifications I went through, as Eccles would suggest that I should buy some princely chateau that we saw in passing, or some lordly park alongside of which our road was lying.

As to remonstrating with him on this score, or, indeed, on any other, it was utterly hopeless; not to say that it was just as likely he would amuse the first group of travellers we met by a ludicrous version of my attempt to coerce him into good behavior.

One day he pushed my patience beyond all limit, and I grew downright angry with him. I had been indulging in that harmless sort of half-flirtation with a young lady, a fellow-traveller; which, not transgressing the bounds of small attentions, does not even excite remark or rebuke.

"Don't listen to that young gentleman's blandishments," said he, laughing; "for, young as he looks, he is already engaged. Come, come, don't look as though you'd strike me, Digby, but deny it if you can."

We were, fortunately for me, coming into a station as he spoke. I sprang out, and travelled third-class the rest of the day to avoid him, and when we met at night, I declared that with one such liberty more I'd part company with him forever.

The hearty good-humor with which he assured me I should not be offended again almost made me ashamed of my complaint. We shook hands over our reconciliation, and vowed we were better friends than ever.

What it cost him to abandon this habit of exalting me before strangers, how nearly it touched one of the chief pleasures of his life, I was, as I thought, soon to see in the altered tone of his manner. In fact, it totally destroyed the easy flippancy he used to wield, and a facility with strangers that once seemed like a special gift with him. I tried in vain to rally him out of this half depression; but it was clear he was not a man of many resources, and that I had already sapped a principal one.

While we thus journeyed, he said to me one day, "I find, Digby, our money is running short; we must make for Zurich: it is the nearest of the places on our letter of credit."

I assented, of course, and we bade adieu to a pleasant family with whom we had been travelling, and who were bound for Dresden, assuring them we should meet them on the Elbe.

Eccles had grown of late more and more serious: not alone had his gayety deserted him, but he grew absent and forgetful to an absurd extent; and it was evident some great preoccupation had hold of him. During the entire of the last day before we reached Zurich he scarcely spoke a word, and as I saw that he had received some letters at Schaffhausen, I attributed his gloom to their tidings. As he had not spoken to me of bad news, I felt ashamed to obtrude myself on his confidence and kept silent, and not a word passed between us as we went. He had telegraphed to the banker, a certain Mr. Heinfetter, to order rooms for us at the hotel; and as we alighted at the door, the gentleman himself was there to meet us.

"Herr Eccles?" said he, eagerly, lifting his hat as we descended; and Eccles moved towards him, and, taking his arm, walked away to some distance, leaving me alone and unnoticed. For several minutes they appeared in closest confab, their heads bent close together, and at last I saw Eccles shake himself free from the other's arm, and throw up both his hands in the air with a gesture of wild despair. I began to suspect some disaster had befallen our remittances, that they were lost or suppressed, and that Eccles was overwhelmed by the misfortune. I own I could not participate in the full measure of the misery it seemed to cause him, and I lighted a cigar and sat down on a stone bench to wait patiently his return.

"I believe you are right; it is the best way, after all," said Eccles, hurriedly. "You say you'll look after the boy, and I'll start by the ten o'clock train."

"Yes, I'll take the boy," said the other; "but you'll have to look sharp and lose no time. They will be sequestering the moment they hear of it, and I half suspect old Engler will be before you."

"But my personal effects? I have things of value."

"Hush, hush! he'll overhear you. Come, young gentleman," said he to me, — "come home and sup with me. The hotel is so full, they've no quarters for you. I'll try if I can't put you up."

Eccles stood with his head bent down as we moved away, then lifted his eyes, waved his hand a couple of times, and said, "By-bye."

"Is n't he coming with us?" asked I.

"Not just yet: he has some business to detain him," said the banker; and we moved on.

CHAPTER XV.

A TERRIBLE SHOCK.

HERR HEINFETTER was a bachelor, and lived in a very modest fashion over his banking-house; and as he was employed from morning to night, I saw next to nothing of him. Eccles, he said, had been called away, and though I eagerly asked where, by whom, and for how long, I got no other answer than "He is called away," in very German English, and with a stolidity of look fully as Teutonic.

The banker was not talkative: he smoked all the evening, and drank beer, and except an occasional monosyllabic comment on its excellence, said little.

"Ach, ja!" he would say, looking at me fixedly, as though assenting to some not exactly satisfactory conclusion his mind had come to about me, — "ach, ja!" And I would have given a good deal at the time to know to what peculiar feature of my fortune or my fate this half-compassionate exclamation extended.

"Is Eccles never coming back?" cried I, one day, as the post came in, and no tidings of him appeared; "is he never coming at all?"

"Never, no more."

"Not coming back?" cried I.

"No; not come back no more."

"Then what am I staying here for? Why do I wait for him?"

"Because you have no money to go elsewhere," said he; and for once he gave way to something he thought was a laugh.

"I don't understand you, Herr Heinfetter," said I; "our letter of credit, Mr. Eccles told me, was on your house here. Is it exhausted, and must I wait for a remittance?"

"It is exhaust; Mr. Eccles exhaust it."

"So that I must write for money; is that so?"

"You may write and write, mien lieber, but it won't come."

Herr Heinfetter drained his tall glass, and, leaning his arms on the table, said: "I will tell you in German, you know it well enough." And forthwith he began a story, which lost nothing of the pain and misery it caused me by the unsympathizing tone and stolid look of the narrator. For my reader's sake, as for my own, I will condense it into the fewest words I can, and omit all that Herr Heinfetter inserted either as comment or censure. My father had eloped with Madame Cleremont! They had fled to Innsprück, from which my father returned to the neighborhood of Belgium, to offer Cleremont a meeting. Cleremont, however, possessed in his hands a reparation he liked better, — my father's check-book, with a number of signed but unfilled checks. These he at once filled up to the last shilling of his credit, and drew out the money, so that my father's first draft on London was returned dishonored. The villa and all its splendid contents were sequestrated, and an action for divorce, with ten thousand pounds laid as damages, already commenced. Of three thousand francs, which our letter assured us at Zurich, Eccles had drawn two thousand: he would have taken all, but Heinfetter, who prudently foresaw I must be got rid of some day, retained one thousand to pay my way. Eccles had gone, promising to return when he had saved his own effects, or what he called his own, from the wreck; but a few lines had come from him to say the smash was complete, the "huissiers" in possession, seals on everything, and "not even the horses watered without a gendarme present in full uniform."

"Tell Digby, if we travel together again, he 'll not have to complain of my putting him off for a man of fortune; and, above all, advise him to avoid Brussels in his journeyings. He 'll find his father's creditors, I 'm afraid, far more attached to him than Mademoiselle Pauline."

His letter wound up with a complaint over his own blighted prospects, for, of course, his chance of the presentation was now next to hopeless, and he did not know what line of life he might be driven to.

And now, shall I own that, ruined and deserted as I was, overwhelmed with sorrow and shame, there was no part of all the misery I felt more bitterly than the fate of her who had been so kindly affectionate to me, — who had nursed me so tenderly in sickness, and been the charming companion of my happiest hours? At first it seemed incredible. My father's manner to her had ever been coldness itself, and I could only lead myself to believe the story by imagining how the continued cruelty of Cleremont had actually driven the unhappy woman to entreat protection against his barbarity. It was as well I should think so, and it served to soften the grief and assuage the intensity of the sorrow the event caused me. I cried over it two entire days and part of a third; and so engrossed was I with this affliction that not a thought of myself, or of my own destitution, ever crossed me.

"Do you know where my father is?" asked I of the banker.

"Yes," said he, dryly.

"May I have his address? I wish to write to him."

"This is what he send for message," said he, producing a telegram, the address of which he had carefully torn off. "It is of you he speak: 'Do what you like with him except bother me. Let him have whatever money is in your hands to my credit, and let him understand he has no more to expect from Roger Norcott.'"

"May I keep this paper, sir?" asked I, in a humble tone.

"I see no reason against it. Yes," muttered he. "As to the moneys, Eccles have drawn eighty pound; there is forty remain to you."

I sat down and covered my face with my hands. It was a habit with me when I wanted to apply myself fully to thought; but Herr Heinfetter suspected that I had given way to grief, and began to cheer me up. I at once undeceived him, and said, "No, I was not crying, sir; I was only thinking what I had best do. If you allow me, I will go up to my room, and think it over by myself. I shall be calmer, even if I hit on nothing profitable."

I passed twelve hours alone, occasionally dropping off to sleep out of sheer weariness, for my brain worked hard, travelling over a wide space, and taking in every contingency and every accident I could think of. I might go back and seek out my mother; but to what end, if I should only become a dependant on her? No; far better that I should try and obtain some means of earning a livelihood, ever so humble, abroad, than spread the disgrace of my family at home. Perhaps Herr Heinfetter might accept my services in some shape; I could be anything but a servant.

When I told him I wished to earn my bread, he looked doubtingly at me in silence, shaking his head, and muttering, "Nein, niemals, nein," in every cadence of despair.

"Could you not try me, sir?" pleaded I, earnestly; but his head moved sadly in refusal.

"I will think of it," he said at last, and he left me.

He was as good as his word; he thought of it for two whole days, and then said that he had a correspondent on the shore of the Adriatic, in a little-visited town, where no news of my father's history was like to reach, and that he would write to him to take me into his counting-house in some capacity: a clerk, or possibly a messenger, till I should prove myself worthy of being advanced to the desk. It would be hard work, however, he said; Herr Oppovich was a Slavic, and they were people who gave themselves few indulgences, and their dependants still fewer.

He went on to tell me that the house of Hodnig and Oppovich had been a wealthy firm formerly, but that Hodnig had over-speculated, and died of a broken heart; that now, after years of patient toil and thrift, Oppovich had restored the credit of the house, and was in good repute in the world of trade. Some time back he had written to Heinfetter to send him a young fellow who knew languages and was willing to work.

"That 's all," he said; "shall I venture to tell him that I recommend you for these?"

"Let me have a trial," said I, gravely.

"I will write your letter to-night, then, and you shall set out to-morrow for Vienna; thence you 'll take the rail to Trieste, and by sea you 'll reach Fiume, where Herr Oppovich lives."

I thanked him heartily, and went to my room.

On the morning that followed began my new life. I was no longer to be the pampered and spoiled child of fortune, surrounded with every appliance of luxury, and waited on by obsequious servants. I was now to travel modestly, to fare humbly, and to ponder over the smallest outlay, lest it should limit me in some other quarter of greater need. But of all the changes in my condition, none struck me so painfully at first as the loss of consideration from strangers that immediately followed my fallen state. People who had no concern with my well-to-do condition, who could take no possible interest in my prosperity, had been courteous to me hitherto, simply because I was prosperous, and were now become something almost the reverse for no other reason, that I could see, than that I was poor.

Where before I had met willingness to make my acquaintance, and an almost cordial acceptance, I was now to find distance and reserve. Above all, I discovered that there was a general distrust of the poor man, as though he were one more especially exposed to rash influences, and more likely to yield to them.

I got some sharp lessons in these things the first few days of my journey, but I dropped down at last into the third-class train, and found myself at ease. My fellow-travellers were not very polished or very cultivated, but in one respect their good breeding had the superiority over that of finer folk. They never questioned my right to be saving, nor seemed to think the worse of me for being poor.

Herr Heinfetter had counselled me to stay a few days at Vienna, and provide myself with clothes more suitable to my new condition than those I was wearing.

"If old Ignaz Oppovich saw a silk-lined coat, he'd soon send you about your business," said he; "and as to that fine watch-chain and its gay trinkets, you have only to appear with it once to get your dismissal."

It was not easy, with my little experience of life, to see how these things should enter into an estimate of me, or why Herr Ignaz should concern him with other attributes of mine than such as touched my clerkship; but as I was entering on a world where all was new, where not only the people, but their prejudices and their likings, were all strange to me, I resolved to approach them in an honest spirit, and with a desire to conform to them as well as I was able.

Lest the name Norcott appearing in the newspapers in my father's case should connect me with his story, Heinfetter advised me to call myself after my mother's family, which sounded, besides, less highly born; and I had my passport made out in the name of Digby Owen.

"Mind, lad," said the banker, as he parted with me, "give yourself no airs with Ignaz Oppovich; do not turn up your nose at his homely fare, or handle his coarse napkin as if it hurt your skin, as I have seen you do here. From his door to destitution there is only a step, and bethink yourself twice before you take it. I have done all I mean to do by you, more than I shall ever be paid for. And now, good-bye."

This sort of language grated very harshly on my ears at first; but I had resolved to bear my lot courageously, and conform, where I could, to the tone of those I had come down to.

I thanked him, then, respectfully and calmly, for his hospitality to me, and went my way.

CHAPTER XVI.

FIUME.

"I SAW a young fellow, so like that boy of Norcott's in a third-class carriage," I overheard a traveller say to his companion, as we stopped to sup at Gratz.

"He'll have scarcely come to that, I fancy," said the other, "though Norcott must have run through nearly everything by this time."

It was about the last time I was to hear myself called in this fashion. They who were to know me thenceforward were to know me by another name, and in a rank that had no traditions; and I own I accepted this humble fortune with a more contented spirit and with less chagrin than it cost me to hear myself spoken of in this half-contemptuous fashion.

I was now very plainly, simply dressed. I made no display of studs or watch-chain; I even gave up the ring I used to wear, and took care that my gloves — in which I once was almost puppyish — should be the commonest and the cheapest.

If there was something that at moments fell very heavily on my heart in the utter destitution of my lot, there was, on the other hand, what nerved my heart and stimulated me in the thought that there was some heroism in what I was doing. I was, so to say, about to seek my fortune; and what to a young mind could be more full of interest and anticipation than such a thought? To be entirely self-dependent; to be thrown into situations of difficulty, with nothing but one's own resources to rely on; to be obliged to trust to one's head for counsel, and one's heart for courage; to see oneself, as it were, alone against the world,— is intensely exciting.

In the days of romance there were personal perils to confront, and appalling dangers to be surmounted; but now it was a game of life, to be played, not merely with a stout heart and a ready hand, but with a cool head and a steady eye. Young as I was, I had seen a great deal. In that strange comedy of which my father's guests were the performers, there was great insight into character to be gained, and a marvellous knowledge of that skill by which they who live by their wits cultivate these same wits to live.

If I was not totally corrupted by the habits and ways of that life, I owe it wholly to those teachings of my dear mother which, through all the turmoil and confusion of this ill-regulated existence, still held a place in my heart, and led me again and again to ask myself how *she* would think of this, or what judgment she would pass on that; and even in this remnant of a conscience there was some safety. I tried to persuade myself that it was well for me that all this was now over, and that an honest existence was now about to open to me, — an existence in which my good mother's lessons would avail me more, stimulate me to the right and save me from the wrong, and give to the humblest cares of daily labor a halo that had never shone on my life of splendor.

It was late at night when I reached Trieste, and I left it at daybreak. The small steamer in which I had taken my passage followed the coast line, calling at even the most insignificant little towns and villages, and winding its track through that myriad of islands which lie scattered along this strange shore. The quiet, old-world look of these quaint towns, the simple articles they dealt in, the strange dress, and the stranger sounds of the language of these people, all told me into what a new life I had just set foot, and how essential it was to leave all my former habits behind me as I entered here.

The sun had just gone below the sea, as we rounded the great promontory of the north and entered the bay of Fiume. Scarcely had we passed in than the channel seemed to close behind us, and we were moving along over what looked like a magnificent lake bounded on every side by lofty mountains, — for the islands of the bay are so placed that they conceal the openings to the Adriatic. If the base of the great mountains was steeped in a blue, deep and mellow as the sea itself, their summits glowed in the carbuncle tints of the setting sun, and over these again long lines of cloud, golden and azure streaks marked the sky, almost on fire, as it were, with the last parting salute of the glorious orb that was setting. It was not merely that I had never seen, but I could not have imagined such beauty of landscape, and as we swept quietly along nearer the shore, and I could mark the villas shrouded in the deep woods of chestnut and oak, and saw the olive and the cactus, with the orange and the oleander, bending their leafy branches over the blue water, I thought to myself, would not a life there be nearer Paradise than anything wealth and fortune could buy elsewhere?

"There, yonder," said the captain, pointing to the ornamented chimneys of a house surrounded by a deep oakwood, and the terrace of which overhung the sea, "that 's the villa of old Ignaz Oppovich. They say the Emperor tempted him with half a million of florins to sell it, but, miser as he was and is, the old fellow refused it."

"Is that Oppovich of the firm of Hodnig and Oppovich?" asked I.

"Yes; the house is all Oppovich's now, and half Fiume too, I believe."

"There are worse fellows than old Ignaz," said another, gravely. "I wonder what would become of the hospital, or the poor-house, or the asylum for the orphans here, but for him."

"He 's a Jew," said another, spitting out with contempt.

"A Jew that could teach many a Christian the virtues of his own faith," cried the former. "A Jew that never refused an alms to the poor, no matter of what belief, and that never spoke ill of his neighbor."

"I never heard as much good of him before, and I have been a member of the town council with him these thirty years."

The other touched his hat respectfully in recognition of the speaker's rank, and said no more.

I took my little portmanteau in my hand as we landed, and made for a small hotel which faced the sea. I had determined not to present myself to the Herr Oppovich till morning, and to take that evening to see the town and its neighborhood.

As I strolled about, gazing with a stranger's curiosity at all that was new and odd to me in this quiet spot, I felt coming over me that deep depression which almost invariably falls upon him who, alone and friendless, makes first acquaintance with the scene wherein he is to live. How hard it is for him to believe that the objects he sees can ever become of interest to him; how impossible it seems that he will live to look on this as home; that he will walk that narrow street as a familiar spot; giving back the kindly greetings that he gets, and feeling that strange, mysterious sense of brotherhood that grows out of daily intercourse with the same people!

I was curious to see where the Herr Oppovich lived, and found the place after some search. The public garden of the town, a prettily planted spot, lies between two mountain streams, flanked by tall mountains, and is rather shunned by the inhabitants from its suspicion of damp. Through this deserted spot — for I saw not one being as I went — I passed on to a dark copse at the extreme end, and beyond which a small wooden bridge led over to a garden wildly overgrown with evergreens and shrubs, and so neglected that it was not easy at first to select the right path amongst the many that led through the tangled brushwood. Following one of these, I came out on a little lawn in front of a long low house of two stories. The roof was high-pitched, and the windows narrow and defended by strong iron shutters, which lay open on the outside wall, displaying many a bolt and bar, indicative of strength and resistance. No smoke issued from a chimney, not a sound broke the stillness, nor was there a trace of any living thing around, — desolation like it I had never seen. At last, a mean, half-starved dog crept coweringly across the lawn, and, drawing nigh the door, stood and whined plaintively. After a brief pause the door opened, the animal stole in; the door then closed with a bang, and all was still as before. I turned back towards the town with a heavy heart; a gloomy dread of those I was to be associated with on the morrow was over me, and I went to the inn and locked myself into my room, and fell upon my bed with a sense of desolation that found vent at last in a torrent of tears.

As I look back on the night that followed, it seems to me one of the saddest passages of my life. If I fell asleep, it was to dream of the past, with all its exciting pleasures and delights, and then, awaking suddenly, I found myself in this wretched, poverty-stricken room, where every object spoke of misery, and recalled me to the thought of a condition as ignoble and as lowly.

I remember well how I longed for day-dawn, that I might get up and wander along the shore, and taste the fresh breeze, and hear the plash of the sea, and seek in that greater, wider, and more beautiful world of nature a peace that my own despairing thoughts would not suffer me to enjoy. And, at the first gleam of light, I did steal down, and issue forth, to walk for hours along the bay in a sort of enchantment from the beauty of the scene, that filled me at last with a sense of almost happiness. I thought of Pauline, too, and wondered would *she* partake of the delight this lovely spot imparted to *me?* Would *she* see these leafy woods, that bold mountain, that crystal sea, with its glittering sands many a fathom deep, as I saw them? And if so, what a stimulus to labor and grow rich was in the thought.

In pleasant reveries, that dashed the future with much that had delighted me in the past, the hours rolled on till it was time to present myself at Herr Oppovich's. Armed with my letter of introduction, I soon found myself at the door of a large warehouse, over which his name stood in big letters. A narrow wooden stair ascended steeply from the entrance to a long low room, in which fully twenty clerks were busily engaged at their desks. At the end of this, in a smaller room, I was told Herr Ignaz — for he was always so called — held his private office.

Before I was well conscious of it, I was standing in this room before a short, thick-set old man, with heavy eyebrows and beard, and whose long coat of coarse cloth reached to his feet.

He sat and examined me as he read the note, pausing at times in the reading as if to compare me with the indications before him.

"Digby Owen, — is that the name?" asked he.

"Yes, sir."

"Native of Ireland, and never before employed in commercial pursuits?"

I nodded to this interrogatory.

"I am not in love with Ireland, nor do I feel a great liking for ignorance, Herr Owen," said he, slowly; and there was a deep impressiveness in his tone, though the words came with the thick accentuation of the Jew. "My old friend and correspondent should have remembered these prejudices of mine. Herr Jacob Heinfetter should not have sent you here."

I knew not what reply to make to this, and was silent.

"He should not have sent you here;" and he repeated the words with increased solemnity. "What do you want me to do with you?" said he, sharply, after a brief pause.

"Anything that will serve to let me earn my bread," said I, calmly.

"But I can get scores like you, young man, for the wages we give servants here; and would you be content with that?"

"I must take what you are pleased to give me."

He rang a little bell beside him, and cried out, "Send Harasch here." And, at the word, a short, beetle-browed, ill-favored young fellow appeared at the door, pen in hand.

"Bring me your ledger," said the old man. "Look here now," said he to me, as he turned over the beautifully clean and neatly kept volume: "this is the work of one who earns six hundred florins a year. You began with four, Harasch?"

"Three hundred, Herr Ignaz," said the lad, bowing.

"Can you live and wear such clothes as these," said the old man, touching my tweed coat, "for three hundred florins a year, — paper florins, mind, which in your money would make about twenty-five pounds?"

"I will do my best with it," said I, determined he should not deter me by mere words.

"Take him with you, Harasch; let him copy into the waste-book. We shall see in a few days what he's fit for."

At a sign from the youth I followed him out, and soon found myself in the outer room, where a considerable number of the younger clerks were waiting to acknowledge me.

Nothing could well be less like the manners and habits I was used to than the coarse familiarity and easy impertinence of these young fellows. They questioned me about my birth, my education, my means, what circumstance had driven me to my present step, and why none of my friends had done anything to save me from it. Not content with a number of very searching inquiries, they began to assure me that Herr Ignaz would not put up with my incapacity for a week. "He'll send you into the yard," cried one; and the sentence was chorused at once. "Ja! ja! he'll be sent into the yard." And though I was dying to know what that might mean, my pride restrained my curiosity, and I would not condescend to ask.

"Won't he be fine in the yard!" I heard one whisper to another, and they both began laughing at the conceit; and I now sat down on a bench and lost myself in thought.

"Come; we are going to dinner, Engländer," said Harasch to me at last; and I arose and followed him.

CHAPTER XVII.

HANSERL OF THE YARD.

I WAS soon to learn what being "sent into the yard" meant. Within a week that destiny was mine. Being so sent was the phrase for being charged to count the staves as they arrived in wagon-loads from Hungary, — oaken staves being the chief "industry" of Fiume, and the principal source of Herr Oppovich's fortune.

My companion, and, indeed, my instructor in this intellectual employment, was a strange-looking, dwarfish creature, who, whatever the season, wore a suit of dark yellow leather, the jerkin being fastened round the waist by a broad belt with a heavy brass buckle. He had been in the yard three-and-forty years, and though his assistants had been uniformly promoted to the office, he had met no advancement in life, but was still in the same walk and the same grade in which he had started.

Hans Spöner was, however, a philosopher, and went on his road uncomplainingly. He said that the open air and the freedom were better than the closeness and confinement within-doors, and if his pay was smaller, his healthier appetite made him able to relish plainer food; and this mode of reconciling things — striking the balance between good and ill — went through all he said or did, and his favorite phrase, "Es ist fast einerley," or "It comes to about the same," comprised his whole system of worldly knowledge.

If at first I felt the occupation assigned to me as an insult and a degradation, Hanserl's companionship soon reconciled me to submit to it with patience. It was not merely that he displayed an invariable good-humor and pleasantry, but there was a forbearance about him, and a delicacy in his dealing with me, actually gentlemanlike. Thus, he never questioned me as to my former condition, nor asked by what accident I had fallen to my present lot; and, while showing in many ways that he saw I was unused to hardship, he rather treated my inexperience as a mere fortuitous circumstance than as a thing to comment or dwell on. Hanserl, besides this, taught me how to live on my humble pay of a florin and ten kreutzers — about two shillings — daily. I had a small room that led out into the yard, and could consequently devote my modest salary to my maintenance. The straitened economy of Hans himself had enabled him to lay by about eight hundred florins, and he strongly advised me to arrange my mode of life on a plan that would admit of such a prudent saving.

Less for this purpose than to give my friend a strong proof of the full confidence I reposed in his judgment and his honor, I confided to his care all my earnings, and only begged he would provide for me as for himself; and thus Hans and I became inseparable. We took our coffee together at daybreak, our little soup and boiled beef at noon, and our potato-salad, with perhaps a sardine or such like, at night for supper; the "Viertelwein" — the fourth of a bottle — being equitably divided between us to cheer our hearts and cement good-fellowship on certainly as acrid a liquor as ever served two such excellent ends.

None of the clerks would condescend to know us. Herr Fripper, the cashier, would nod to us in the street, but the younger men never recognized us at all, save in some expansive moment of freedom by a wink or a jerk of the head. We were in a most subordinate condition, and they made us feel it.

From Hans I learned that Herr Oppovich was a widower with two children, a son and a daughter. The former was an irreclaimable scamp and vagabond, whose debts had been paid over and over again, and who had been turned out of the army with disgrace, and was now wandering about Europe, living on his father's friends, and trading for small loans on his family name. This was Adolph Oppovich. The girl — Sara she was called — was, in Hanserl's judgment, not much more to be liked than her brother. She was proud and insolent to a degree that would have been remarkable in a princess of a reigning house. From the clerks she exacted a homage that was positively absurd. It was not alone that they should always stand uncovered as she passed, but that if any had occasion to address her he should prelude what he had to say by kissing her hand, an act of vassalage that in Austria is limited to persons of the humblest kind.

"She regards me as a wild beast, and I am therefore spared this piece of servitude," said Hans; and he laughed his noiseless uncouth laugh as he thought of his immunity.

"Is she handsome?" asked I.

"How can she be handsome when she is so overbearing?" said he. "Is not beauty gentleness, mildness, softness? How can it agree with eyes that flash disdain, and a mouth that seems to curl with insolence? The old proverb says, 'Schönheit ist Sanftheit;' and that 's why Our Lady is always so lovely."

Hanserl was a devout Catholic; and not impossibly this sentiment made his judgment of the young Jewess all the more severe. Of Herr Oppovich himself he would say little. Perhaps he deemed it was not loyal to discuss him whose bread he ate; perhaps he had not sufficient experience of me to trust me with his opinion; at all events, he went no further than an admission that he was wise and keen in business, — one who made few mistakes himself, nor forgave them easily in another.

"Never do more than he tells you to do, younker," said Hans to me one day; "and he 'll trust you, if you do that well." And this was not the least valuable hint he gave me.

Hans had a great deal of small worldly wisdom, the fruit rather of a long experience than of any remarkable gift of observation. As he said himself, it took him four years to learn the business of the yard; and as I acquired the knowledge in about a week, he regarded me as a perfect genius.

We soon became fast and firm friends. The way in which I had surrendered myself to his guidance — giving him up the management of my money, and actually submitting to his authority as though I were his son — had won upon the old man immensely; while I, on my side, — friendless and companionless, save with himself, — drew close to the only one who seemed to take an interest in me. At first, — I must own it, — as we wended our way at noon towards the little eating-house where we dined, and I saw the friends with whom Hans exchanged greetings, and felt the class and condition he belonged to reflected in the coarse looks and coarser ways of his associates, I was ashamed to think to what I had fallen. I had, indeed, no respect nor any liking for the young fellows of the counting-house. They were intensely, offensively vulgar; but they had the outward semblance, the dress, and the gait of their betters, and they were privileged by appearance to stroll into a *café* and sit down, from which I and my companion would speedily have been ejected. I confess I envied them that mere right of admission into the well-dressed world, and sorrowed over my own exclusion as though it had been inflicted on me as a punishment.

This jealous feeling met no encouragement from Hans. The old man had no rancour of any kind in his nature. He had no sense of discontent with his condition, nor any desire to change it. Counting staves seemed to him a very fitting way to occupy existence; and he knew of many occupations that were less pleasant and less wholesome. Rags, for instance, for the paper-mill, or hides, in both of which Herr Ignaz dealt, Hans would have seriously disliked; but staves were cleanly, and smelt fresh and sweetly of the oak-wood they came from; and there was something noble in their destiny — to form casks and hogsheads for the rich wines of France and Spain — which he was fond of recalling; and so would he say, "Without you and me, boy, or those like us, they 'd have no vats nor barrels for the red grape-juice."

While he thus talked to me, trying to invest our humble calling with what might elevate it in my eyes, I struggled often with myself whether I should not tell him the story of my life, — in what rank I had lived, to what hopes of fortune I had been reared. Would this knowledge have raised me in the old man's esteem, or would it have estranged him from me? that was the question. How should I come through the ordeal of his judgment,— higher or lower? A mere chance decided for me what all my pondering could not resolve. Hans came home one night with a little book in his hand, a present for me. It was a French grammar, and, as he told me, the key to all knowledge.

"The French are the great people of the world," said he, "and till you know their tongue, you can have no real insight into learning." There was a "younker," once under him in the yard, who, just because he could read and write French, was now a cashier, with six hundred florins' salary. "When you have worked hard for three months, we'll look out for a master, Owen."

"But I know it already, Hanserl," said I, proudly. "I speak it even better than I speak German, and Italian too! Ay, stare at me, but it's true. I had masters for these, and for Greek and Latin; and I was taught to draw, and to sing, and to play the piano, and I learned how to ride and to dance."

"Just like a born gentleman," broke in Hans.

"I was, and I am, a born gentleman; don't shake your head, or wring your hands, Hanserl. I'm not going mad! These are not ravings! I'll soon convince you what I say is true." And I hurried to my room, and, opening my trunk, took out my watch and some trinkets, some studs of value, and a costly chain my father gave me. "These are all mine! I used to wear them once, as commonly as I now wear these bone buttons. There were more servants in my father's house than there are clerks in Herr Oppovich's counting-house. Let me tell you who I was, and how I came to be what I am."

I told him my whole story, the old man listening with an eagerness quite intense, but never more deeply interested than when I told of the splendors and magnificence of my father's house. He never wearied hearing of costly entertainments and great banquets, where troops of servants waited, and every wish of the guests was at once ministered to.

"And all this," cried he, at last, "all this, day after day, night after night, and not once a year only, as we see it here, on the Fräulein Sara's birthday!" And now the poor old man, as if to compensate himself for listening so long, broke out into a description of the festivities by which Herr Oppovich celebrated his daughter's birthday:

an occasion on which he invited all in his employment to pass the day at his villa, on the side of the bay, and when, by Hanserl's account, a most unbounded hospitality held sway. "There are no portions, no measured quantities, but each is free to eat and drink as he likes," cried Hans, who, with this praise, described a banquet of millennial magnificence. "But you will see for yourself," added he; "for even the 'yard' is invited."

I cautioned him strictly not to divulge what I had told him of myself; nor was it necessary, after all, for he well knew how Herr Ignaz resented the thought of any one in his service having other pretensions than such as grew out of his own favor towards them.

"You'd be sent away to-morrow, younker," said he, "if he but knew what you were. There's an old proverb shows how they think of people of quality: —

'Die Juden nicht dulden
Den Herrschaft mit Schulden.'

The Jews cannot abide the great folk, with their indebtedness; and to deem these inseparable is a creed.

"On the 31st of August falls the Fräulein's birthday, lad, and you shall tell me the next morning if your father gave a grander *fête* than that."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SAIL ACROSS THE BAY.

THE 31st of August dawned at last, and with the promise of a lovely autumnal day. It was the one holiday of the year at Herr Oppovich's: for Sunday was only externally observed in deference to the feelings of the Christian world, and clerks sat at their desks inside, and within the barred shutters the whole work of life went on as though a week-day. As for us in the yard, it was our day of most rigorous discipline; for Ignaz himself was wont to come down on a tour of inspection, and his quick glances were sure to detect at once the slightest irregularity or neglect. He seldom noticed me on these occasions. A word addressed to Hanserl as to how the "younker" was doing, would be all the recognition vouchsafed me, or, at most, a short nod of the head would convey that he had seen me. Hanserl's reports were, however, always favorable; and I had so far good reason to believe that my master was content with me.

From Hans, who had talked of nothing but this *fête* for three or four weeks, I had learned that a beautiful villa which Herr Ignaz owned on the west side of the bay was always opened. It was considered much too grand a place to live in, being of princely proportions and splendidly furnished; indeed, it had come into Herr Oppovich's possession on a mortgage, and the thought of using it as a residence never occurred to him. To have kept the grounds alone in order would have cost a moderate fortune; and as there was no natural supply of water on the spot, a steam-pump was kept in constant use to direct streams in different directions. This, which its former owner freely paid for, was an outlay that Herr Oppovich regarded as most wasteful, and reduced at once to the very narrowest limits consistent with the life of the plants and shrubs around. The ornamental fountains were, of course, left unfed; *jets-d'eau* ceased to play; and the various tanks in which water-nymphs of white marble disported, were dried up; ivy and the wild vine draping the statues, and hiding the sculptured urns in leafy embrace.

Of the rare plants and flowers, hundreds, of course, died; indeed, none but those of hardy nature could survive this stinted aliment. Greenhouses and conservatories, too, fell into disrepair and neglect; but such was the marvellous wealth of vegetation that, fast as walls would crumble and architraves give way, foliage and blossom would spread over the ruin, and the rare plants within, mingling with the stronger vegetation without, would form a tangled mass of leafy beauty of surpassing loveliness; and thus the rarest orchids were seen stretching their delicate tendrils over forest-trees, and the cactus and the mimosa mingled with common field-flowers. If I linger amongst these things, it is because they contrasted so strikingly to me with the trim propriety and fastidious neatness of the Malibran Villa, where no leaf littered a walk, nor a single tarnished blossom was suffered to remain on its stalk. Yet was the Abazzia Villa a thousand times more beautiful. In the one, the uppermost thought was the endless care and skill of the gardeners, and the wealth that had provided them. The clink of gold seemed to rise from the crushed gravel as you walked; the fountains glittered with gold; the conservatories exhaled it. Here, however, it seemed as though Nature, rich in her own unbounded resources, was showing how little she needed of man or his appliances. It was the very exuberance of growth on every side; and all this backed by a bold mountain lofty as an Alp, and washed by a sea in front, and that sea the blue Adriatic.

I had often heard of the thrift and parsimony of Herr Oppovich's household. Even in the humble eating-house I frequented, sneers at its economies were frequent. No trace of such a saving spirit displayed itself on this occasion. Not merely were guests largely and freely invited, but carriages were stationed at appointed spots to convey them to the villa, and a number of boats awaited at the mole for those who preferred to go by water. This latter mode of conveyance was adopted by the clerks and officials of the house, as savoring less of pretension; and so was it that just as the morning was ripening into warmth, I found myself one of a large company in a wide eight-oared boat, calmly skimming along towards Abazzia. By some accident I got separated from Hanserl; and when I waved my hand to him to join me, he delayed to return my salutation, for, as he said afterwards, I was *gar schön*, — quite fine, — and he did not recognize me.

It was true I had dressed myself in the velvet jacket and vest I had worn on the night of our own *fête*, and wore my velvet cap, without, however, the heron feather, any more than I put on any of my trinkets, or even my watch.

This studied simplicity on my part was not rewarded as I hoped for; since, scarcely were we under way, than my dress and "get-up" became the subject of an animated debate among my companions, who discussed me with a freedom and a candor that showed they regarded me simply as a sort of lay figure for the display of so much drapery.

"That's how they dress in the yard," cried one; "and we who have three times the pay, can scarcely afford broadcloth. Will any one explain that to me?"

"There must be rare perquisites down there," chimed in another; "for they say that the old dwarf Hanserl has laid by two thousand gulden."

"They tell *me* five thousand," said another.

"Two or twenty-two would make no difference. No fellow on his pay could honestly do more than keep life in his body, not to speak of wearing velvet like the younker there."

A short digression now intervened, one of the party having suggested that in England velvet was the cheapest wear known, that all the laborers on canals and railroads wore it from economy, and that, in fact, it was the badge of a very humble condition. The assertion encountered some disbelief, and it was ultimately suggested to refer the matter to me for decision, this being the first evidence they had given of their recognition of me as a sentient being.

"What would *he* know?" broke in an elderly clerk; "he must have come away from England a mere child, seeing how he speaks German now."

"Or if he did know, is it likely he'd tell?" observed another.

"At all events, let us ask him what it costs. I say, Knabe, come here and let us see your fine clothes; we are all proud of having so grand a colleague."

"You might show your pride, then, more suitably than by insulting him," said I, with perfect calm.

Had I discharged a loaded pistol in the midst of them, the dismay and astonishment could not have been greater.

That any one "aus dem Hof" — "out of the yard" — should presume to think he had feelings that could be outraged, seemed a degree of arrogance beyond belief, and my word "insult" was repeated from mouth to mouth with amazement.

"Come here, Knabe," said the cashier, in a voice of blended gentleness and command, — "come here, and let us talk to you."

I arose and made my way from the bow to the stern of the boat. Short as the distance was, it gave me time to bethink me that I must repress all anger or irritation if I desired to keep my secret; so that when I reached my place, my mind was made up.

"Silk-velvet as I live!" said one who passed his hand along my sleeve as I went.

"No one wishes to offend you, youngster," said the cashier to me, as he placed me beside him; "nor when we talk freely to each other, as is our wont, are any of us offended."

"But you forget, sir," said I, "that I have no share in these freedoms, and that were I to attempt them, you'd resent the liberty pretty soon."

"The Knabe is right," "He says what's true," "He speaks sensibly," were muttered all around.

"You have been well educated, I suspect?" said the cashier, in a gentle voice; and now the thought that by a word — a mere word — I might compromise myself beyond recall flashed across me, and I answered, "I have learned some things."

"One of which was caution," broke in another; and a roar of laughter welcomed his joke.

Many a severer sarcasm would not have cut so deeply into me. The imputation of a reserve based on cunning was too much for my temper, and in a moment I forgot all prudence, and hotly said, "If I am such an object of interest to you, gentlemen, that you must know even the details of my education, the only way I see to satisfy this curiosity of yours is to say that, if you will question me as to what I know and what I do not, I will do my best to answer you."

"That 's a challenge," cried one; "he thinks we are too illiterate to examine him."

"We see that you speak German fluently," said the cashier; "do you know French?"

I nodded assent.

"And Italian and English?"

"Yes; English is my native language."

"What about Greek and Latin, boy?"

"Very little Greek; some half-dozen Latin authors."

"Any Hebrew?" chimed in one, with a smile of half mockery.

"Not a syllable."

"That 's a pity, for you could have chatted with Herr Ignaz in it."

"Or the Fräulein," muttered another. "She knows no Hebrew," "She does; she reads it well," "Nothing of the kind," were quickly spoken from many quarters; and a very hot discussion ensued, in which the Fräulein Sara's accomplishments and acquirements took the place of mine in public interest.

While the debate went on with no small warmth on either side, — for it involved a personal question that stimulated each of the combatants; namely, the amount of intimacy they enjoyed in the family and household of their master: a point on which they seemed to feel the most acute sensibility, — while this, therefore, continued, the cashier patted me good-humoredly on the arm, and asked me how I liked Fiume; if I had made any pleasant acquaintances; and how I usually passed my evenings? And while thus chatting pleasantly, we glided into the little bay of the villa, and landed.

As boat after boat came alongside the jetty, numbers rushed down to meet and welcome their friends. All seemed half wild with delight; and the adventures they had had on the road, the loveliness of the villa, and the courtesy they had been met with, resounded on every side. All had friends, eager to talk or to listen, — all but myself. I alone had no companionship; for in the crowd and confusion I could not find Hanserl, and to ask after him was but to risk the danger of an impertinence.

I sat myself down on a rustic bench at last, thinking that if I remained fixed in one spot I might have the best chance to discover him. And now I could mark the strange company, which, of every age, and almost of every condition, appeared to be present. If the marked features of the Hebrew abounded, there were types of the race that I had never seen before: fair-haired and olive-eyed, with a certain softness of expression, united with great decision about the mouth and chin. The red Jew, too, was there: the fierce-eyed, dark-browed, hollow-cheeked fellow, of piercing acuteness in expression, and an almost reckless look of purpose about him. There was greed, craft, determination, at times even violence, to be read in the faces; but never weakness, never imbecility; and so striking was this that the Christian physiognomy seemed actually vulgar when contrasted with those faces so full of vigorous meaning and concentration.

Nothing could be less like my father's guests than these people. It was not in dress and demeanor and general carriage that they differed, — in their gestures as they met, in their briefest greetings, — but the whole character of their habits, as expressed by their faces, seemed so unlike that I could not imagine any clew to their several ranks, and how this one was higher or greater than that. All the nationalities of Eastern Europe were there, — Hungarian, Styrian, Dalmatian, and Albanian. Traders all: this one bond of traffic and gain blending into a sort of family races and creeds the most discordant, and types whose forefathers had been warring with each other for centuries. Plenty of coarseness there was, unculture and roughness everywhere; but, strangely enough, little vulgarity and no weakness, no deficient energy anywhere. They were the warriors of commerce; and they brought to the battle of trade resolution and boldness and persistence and daring not a whit inferior to what their ancestors had carried into personal conflict.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT THE FÊTE.

If, seated on my rustic bench under a spreading ilex, I was not joining in the pleasures and amusements of those around me, I was tasting an amount of enjoyment to the full as great. It was my first holiday after many months of monotonous labor. It was the first moment in which I felt myself free to look about me without the irksome thought of a teasing duty, — that everlasting song of score and tally, which Hans and I sang duet fashion, and which at last seemed to enter into my very veins and circulate with my blood.

The scene itself was of rare beauty. Seated as I was, the bay appeared a vast lake, for the outlet that led seaward was backed by an island, and thus the coast-line seemed unbroken throughout. Over this wide expanse now hundreds of fishing-boats were moving in every direction, for the wind was blowing fresh from the land, and permitted them to tack and beat as they pleased. If thus in the crisply curling waves, the flitting boats, and the fast-flying clouds above, there was motion and life, there was, in the high peaked-mountain that frowned above me, and in the dark rocks that lined the shore, a stern, impassive grandeur that became all the more striking from contrast. The plashing water, the fishermen's cries, the merry laughter of the revellers as they strayed through brake and copse, seemed all but whispering sounds in that vast amphitheatre of mountain, so solemn was the influence of those towering crags that rose towards heaven.

"Have you been sitting there ever since?" asked the cashier, as he passed me with a string of friends.

"Ever since."

"Not had any breakfast?"

"None."

"Nor paid your compliments to Herr Ignaz and the Fräulein?"

I shook my head in dissent.

"Worst of all," said he, half rebukingly, and passed on. I now bethought me how remiss I had been. It is true it was through a sense of my own insignificant station that I had not presented myself to my host; but I ought to have remembered that this excuse could have no force outside the limits of my own heart; and so, as I despaired of finding Hanserl, whose advice might have aided me, I set out at once to make my respects.

A long, straight avenue, flanked by tall lime-trees, led from the sea to the house; and as I passed up this, crowded now like the chief promenade of a city, I heard many comments as I went on my dress and appearance. "What have we here?" said one. "Is this a prince or a mountebank?" "What boy, with a much-braid-bedizened velvet coat is this?" muttered an old German, as he pointed at me with his pipe-stick.

One pronounced me a fencing-master; but public reprobation found its limit at last by calling me a Frenchman. Shall I own that I heard all these with something much more akin to pride than to shame? The mere fact that they recognized me as unlike one of themselves — that they saw in me what was not "Fiumano" — was in itself a flattery; and as to the depreciation, it was pure ignorance! I am afraid that I even showed how defiantly I took this criticism,— showed it in my look, and showed it in my gait; for as I ascended the steps to the terrace of the villa, I heard more than one comment on my pretentious demeanor. Perhaps some rumor of the approach of a distinguished guest had reached Herr Oppovich where he sat, at a table with some of the magnates of Fiume, for he hastily arose and came forward to meet me. Just as I gained the last terrace, the old man stood bareheaded and bowing before me, a semicircle of wondering guests at either side of him.

"Whom have I the distinguished honor to receive?" said Herr Ignaz, with a profound show of deference.

"Don't you know me, sir? Owen, — Digby Owen."

"What! — how? — Eh — in heaven's name — sure it can't be! Why, I protest it is," cried he, laying his hand on my shoulder, as if to test my reality. "This passes all belief. Who ever saw the like! Come here, Knabe, come here." And slipping his hand within my arm, he led me towards the table he had just quitted. "Sara," cried he, "here is a guest you have not noticed; a high and well-born stranger, who claims all your attention. Let him have the place of honor at your side. This, ladies and gentlemen, is Herr Digby Owen, the stave-counter of my timber-yard!" And he burst, with this, into a roar of laughter, that, long pent up by an effort, now seemed to threaten him with a fit. Nor was the company slow in chorusing him; round after round shook the table, and it seemed as if the joke could never be exhausted.

All this time I stood with my eyes fixed on the Fräulein, whose glance was directed as steadfastly on me. It was a haughty look she bent on me, but it became her well, and I forgave all the scorn it conveyed in the pleasure her beauty gave me. My face, which at first was in a flame, became suddenly cold, and a faintish sickness was creeping over me, so that, to steady myself, I had to lay my hand on a chair. "Won't you sit down?" said she, in a voice fully as much command as invitation. She pointed to a chair a little distance from her own, and I obeyed.

The company appeared now somewhat ashamed of its rude display of merriment, and seeing how quietly and calmly I bore myself,— unresentingly too,— there seemed something like a reaction in my favor. Foreigners, it must be said, are generally sorry when betrayed into any exhibition of ill-breeding, and hastily seek to make amends for it. Perhaps Herr Oppovich himself was the least ready in this movement, for he continued to look on me with a strange blending of displeasure and amusement.

The business of breakfast was now resumed, and the servants passed round with the dishes, helping me amongst the rest. While I was eating, I heard — what, of course, was not meant for my ears — an explanation given by one of the company of my singular appearance. He had lived in England, and said that the English of every condition had a passion for appearing to belong to some rank above their own; that to accomplish this there was no sacrifice they would not make, for these assumptions imposed upon those who made them fully as much as on the public they were made for. "You 'll see," added he, "that the youth there, so long as he figures in that fine dress, will act up to it, so far as he knows how. He talked with a degree of assurance and fluency that gained conviction, and I saw that his hearers went along with him, and there soon began — very cautiously and very guardedly, indeed — a sort of examination of me and my pretensions, for which, fortunately for me, I was so far prepared.

"And do all English boys of your rank in life speak and read four languages?" asked Herr Ignaz, after listening some time to my answers.

"You are assuming to know his rank, papa," whispered Sara, who watched me closely during the whole interrogatory.

"Let him answer my question," rejoined the old man, roughly.

"Perhaps not all," said I, half amused at the puzzle I was becoming to them.

"Then how came it your fortune to know them, — that is, if you *do* know them?"

Slipping out of his question, I replied, "Nothing can be easier than to test that point. There are gentlemen here whose acquirements go far beyond mine."

"Your German is very good," said Sara. "Let me hear you speak French."

"It is too much honor for me," said I, bowing, "to address you at all."

"Is your Italian as neat in accent as that?" asked a lady near.

"I believe I am best in Italian, — of course, after English, — for I always talked it with my music-master, as well as with my teacher."

"Music-master!" cried Herr Ignaz; "what phœnix have we here?"

"I don't think we are quite fair to this boy," said a stern-featured, middle-aged man. "He has shown us that there is no imposition in his pretensions, and we have no right to question him further. If Herr Ignaz thinks you too highly gifted for his service, young man, come over to Carl Bettmeyer's counting-house to-morrow at noon."

"I thank you, sir," said I, "and am very grateful; but if Herr Oppovich will bear with me, I will not leave him."

Sara's eyes met mine as I spoke, and I cannot tell what a flood of rapture her look sent into my heart.

"The boy will do well enough," muttered Herr Ignaz. "Let us have a ramble through the grounds, and see how the skittle-players go on."

And thus passed off the little incident of my appearance: an incident of no moment to any but myself, as I was soon to feel; for the company, descending the steps, strayed away in broken twos or threes through the grounds, as caprice or will inclined them.

If I were going to chronicle the *fête* itself, I might, perhaps, say there was a striking contrast between the picturesque beauty of the spot, and the pastime of those who occupied it. The scene recalled nothing so much as a village fair. All the simple out-of-door amusements of popular taste were there. There were conjurors and saltimbanques and fortune-tellers, lottery-booths and ninepin alleys and restaurants, only differing from their prototypes in that there was nothing to pay. If a considerable number of the guests were well pleased with the pleasures provided for them, there were others no less amused as spectators of these enjoyments, and the result was an amount of mirth and good humor almost unbounded. There were representatives of almost every class and condition, from the prosperous merchant or rich banker down to the humblest clerk, or even the porter of the warehouse; and yet a certain tone of equality pervaded all, and I observed that they mixed with each other on terms of friendliness and familiarity that never recalled any difference of condition: and this feature alone was an ample counterpoise to any vulgarity observable in their manners. If there was any "snobbery," it was of a species quite unlike what we have at home, and I could not detect it.

While I strolled about, amusing myself with the strange sights and scenes around me, I suddenly came upon a sort of merry-go-round, where the performers, seated on small hobby-horses, tilted with a lance at a ring as they spun round, their successes or failures being hailed with cheers or with laughter from the spectators. To my intense astonishment, I might almost say shame, Hanserl was there! Mounted on a fiery little gray, with bloodshot eyes and a flowing tail, the old fellow seemed to have caught the spirit of his steed, for he stood up in his stirrups, and leaned forward with an eagerness that showed how he enjoyed the sport. Why was it that the spectacle so shocked me? Why was it that I shrunk back into the crowd, fearful that he might recognize me? Was it not well if the poor fellow could throw off, even for a passing moment, the weary drudgery of his daily life, and play the fool just for distraction' sake? All this I could have believed and accepted a short time before, and yet now a strange revulsion of feeling had come over me and I went away, well pleased that Hans had not seen nor claimed me. "These vulgar games don't amuse you," said a voice at my side; and I turned and saw the merchant who, at the breakfast-table, invited me to his counting-house.

"Not that," said I; "but they seem strange and odd at a private entertainment. I was scarce prepared to see them here."

"I suspect that is not exactly the reason," said he, laughing. "I know something of your English tone of exclusiveness, and how each class of your people has its appropriate pleasures. You scorn to be amused in low company."

"You seem to forget my own condition, sir."

"Come, come," said he, with a knowing look, "I am not so easily imposed upon, as I told you awhile back. I know England. Your ways and notions are all known to me. It is not in the place you occupy here young lads are found who speak three or four languages, and have hands that show as few signs of labor as yours. Mind," said he, quickly, "I don't want to know your secret."

"If I had a secret, it is scarcely likely I'd tell it to a stranger," said I, haughtily.

"Just so; you'd know your man before you trusted him.

Well, I'm more generous, and I'm going to trust you, whom I never saw till half an hour ago."

"Trust *me!*"

"Trust you," repeated he, slowly. "And first of all, what age would you give that young lady whose birthday we are celebrating?"

"Seventeen — eighteen — perhaps nineteen."

"I thought you'd say so; she looks nineteen. Well, I can tell you her age to an hour. She is fifteen to-day."

"Fifteen!"

"Not a day older, and yet she is the most finished coquette in Europe. Having given Fiume to understand that there is not a man here whose pretensions she would listen to, her whole aim and object is to surround herself with admirers, — I might say worshippers. Young fellows are fools enough to believe they have a chance of winning her favor, while each sees how contemptuously she treats the other. They do not perceive it is the number of adorers she cares for."

"But what is all this to me?"

"Simply that you'll be enlisted in that corps to-morrow," said he, with a malicious laugh; "and I thought I'd do you a good turn to warn you as to what is in store for you."

"Me? *I* enlisted! Why, just bethink you, sir, who and what I am: the very lowest creature in her father's employment."

"What does that signify? There's a mystery about you. You are not — at least you were not — what you seem now. You have as good looks and better manners than the people usually about her. She can amuse herself with you, and so far harmlessly that she can dismiss you when she's tired of you, and if she can only persuade you to believe yourself in love with her, and can store up a reasonable share of misery for you in consequence, you'll make her nearer being happy than she has felt this many a day."

"I don't understand all this," said I, doubtingly.

"Well, you will one of these days; that is, unless you have the good sense to take my warning in good part, and avoid her altogether."

"It will be quite enough for me to bear in mind who she is, and what I am!" said I, calmly.

"You think so? Well, I don't agree with you. At all events, keep what I have said to yourself, even if you don't mean to profit by it." And with this he left me.

That strange education of mine, in which M. de Balzac figured as a chief instructor, made me reflect on what I had heard in a spirit little like that of an ordinary lad of sixteen years of age. Those wonderful stories, in which passion and emotion represent action, and where the great game of life is played out at a fireside or in a window recess, and where feeling and sentiment war and fight and win or lose, — these same tales supplied me with wherewithal to understand this man's warnings, and at the same time to suspect his motives; and from that moment my life became invested with new interests and new anxieties, and to my own heart I felt myself a hero of romance.

As I sauntered on, revolving very pleasant thoughts to myself, I came upon a party who were picnicking under a tree. Some of them graciously made a place for me, and I sat down and ate my dinner with them. They were very humble people, all of them, but courteous and civil to my quality of stranger in a remarkable degree. Nor was I less struck by the delicate forbearance they showed towards the host; for, while the servant pressed them to drink Bordeaux and champagne, they merely took the little wines of the country, perfectly content with simple fare and the courtesy that offered them better.

When one of them asked me if I had ever seen a *fête* of such magnificence in my own country, my mind went back to that costly entertainment of our villa, and Pauline came up before me, with her long dark eyelashes, and those lustrous eyes beaming with expression, and flashing with a light that dazzled while it charmed. Coquetry has no such votaries as the young. Its artifices, its studied graces, its thousand rogueries, to *them* seem all that is most natural and most "naive;" and thus every toss of her dark curls, every little mock resentment of her beautiful mouth, every bend and motion of her supple figure, rose to my mind, till I pictured her image before me, and thought I saw her.

"What a hunt I have had after you, Herr Engländer!"

said a servant, who came up to me all flushed and heated. "I have been over the whole park in search of you."

"In search of *me?* Surely you mistake."

"No; it is no mistake. I see no one here in a velvet jacket but yourself; and Herr Ignaz told me to find you and tell you that there is a place kept for you at his table, and they are at dinner now in the large tent before the terrace."

I took leave of my friends, who rose respectfully to make their adieux to the honored guest of the host, and I followed the servant to the house. I was not without my misgivings that the scene of the morning, with its unpleasant cross-examination of me, might be repeated, and I even canvassed myself how far I ought to submit to such liberties; but the event was not to put my dignity to the test. I was received on terms of perfect equality with those about me; and though the dinner had made some progress before I arrived, it was with much difficulty I could avoid being served with soup and all the earlier delicacies of the entertainment.

I will not dwell on the day that to recall seems more to me like a page out of a fairy tale than a little incident of daily life. I was, indeed, to all intents, the enchanted prince of a story, who went about with the lovely princess on his arm, for I danced the mazurka with the Fräulein Sara, and was her partner several times during the evening, and finished the *fête* with her in the cotillon; she declaring, in that calm quiet voice that did not seek to be unheard around, that I alone could dance the waltz à deux temps, and that I slid gently, and did not spring like a Fiumano, or bound like a French bagman, — a praise that brought on me some very menacing looks from certain commis-voyageurs near me, and which I, confident in my "skill of fence," as insolently returned.

"You are not to return to the Hof, Herr von Owen, to-morrow," said she, as we parted. "You are to wait on papa at his office at eleven o'clock." And there was a staid dignity in her words that spoke command; but in styling me "*von*," there was a whole world of recognition, and I kissed her hand as I said good-night with all the deference of her slave, and all the devotion of one who already felt her power and delighted in it.

CHAPTER XX.

OUR INNER LIFE.

Let me open this chapter with an apology, and I mean it not only to extend to errors of the past, but to whatever similar blunders I may commit hereafter. What I desire to ask pardon for is this: I find in this attempt of mine to jot down a portion of my life, that I have laid a most disproportionate stress on some passages the most insignificant and unimportant. Thus, in my last chapter I have dwelt unreasonably on the narrative of one day's pleasure, while it may be that a month, or several months, shall pass over with scarcely mention. For this fault — and I do not attempt to deny it is a fault — I have but one excuse. It is this: my desire has been to place before my reader the events, small as they might be, that influenced my life and decided my destiny. Had I not gone to this *fête*, for instance, — had I taken my holiday in some quiet ramble into the hills alone, or had I passed it, as I have passed scores of happy hours, in the solitude of my own room, — how different might have been my fate!

We all of us know how small and apparently insignificant are the events by which the course of our lives is shapen. A look we catch at parting, a word spoken that might have passed unheard, a pressure of the hand that might or might not have been felt, and straightway all our sailing orders are revoked, and instead of north we go south. Bearing this in mind, my reader will perhaps forgive me, and at least bethink him that these things are not done by me through inadvertence, but of intention and with forethought.

"So we are about to part," said Hanserl to me, as I awoke and found my old companion at my bedside. "You're the twenty-fifth that has left me," said he, mournfully. "But look to it, Knabe, change is not always betterment."

"It was none of *my* doing, Hanserl; none of *my* seeking."

"If you had worn the gray jacket you wear on Sundays, there would have been none of this, lad! I have seen double as many years in the yard as you have been in the world, and none have ever seen me at the master's table or waltzing with the master's daughter."

I could not help smiling, in spite of myself, at the thought of such a spectacle.

"Nor is there need to laugh because I speak of dancing," said he, quickly. "They could tell you up in Kleptowitz there are worse performers than Hans Spöner; and if he is not an Englishman, he is an honest Austrian!"

This he said with a sort of defiance, and as if he expected a reply.

"I have told you already, Hans," said I, soothingly, "that it was none of my seeking if I am to be transferred from the yard. I was very happy there, — very happy to be with you. We were good comrades in the past, as I hope we may be good friends in the future."

"That can scarcely be," said he, sorrowfully. "I can have no friend in the man I must say 'sir' to. It's Herr Ignaz's order," went he on, "he sent for me this morning, and said, 'Hanserl, when you address Herr von Owen,' — aye, he said Herr *von* Owen, — 'never forget he is your superior; and though he once worked with you here in the yard, that was his caprice, and he will do so no more."

"But, Hans, my dear old friend."

"Ja, ja," said he, waving his hand. "Jetzt ist aus! It is all over now. Here 's your reckoning," and he laid a slip of paper on the bed: "Twelve gulden for the dinners, three-fifty for wine and beer, two gulden for the wash. There were four kreutzers for the girl with the guitar; you bade me give her ten, but four was plenty, — that makes seventeen-six-and-sixty: and you 've twenty-three gulden and thirty-four kreutzers in that packet, and so Leb wohl."

And, with a short wave of his hand, he turned away; and as he left the room, I saw that the other hand had been drawn over his eyes, for Hanserl was crying; but I buried my face in the clothes, and sobbed bitterly.

My orders were to present myself at Herr Ignaz's private office by noon. Careful not to presume on what seemed at least a happy turn in my destiny, I dressed in my everyday clothes, studious only that they should be clean and well-brushed.

"I had forgotten you altogether, boy," said Herr Ignaz, as I entered the office, and he went on closing his desk and his iron safe before leaving for dinner. "What was it I had to say to you? Can you help me to it, lad?"

"I 'm afraid not, sir; I only know that you told me to be here at this hour."

"Let me see," said he, thoughtfully. "There was no complaint against you?"

"None, sir, that I know of."

"Nor have you any to make against old Hanserl?"

"Far from it, sir. I have met only kindness from him."

"Wait, wait, wait," said he. "I believe I am coming to it. It was Sara's doing. Yes, I have it now. Sara said you should not be in the yard; that you had been well brought up and cared for. A young girl's fancy, perhaps. Your hands were white. But there is more bad than good in this. Men should be in the station they 're fit for; neither above nor below it. And you did well in the yard; ay, and you liked it?"

"I certainly was very happy there, sir."

"And that 's all one strives for," said he, with a faint sigh; "to be at rest,—to be at rest: and why would you change, boy?"

"I am not seeking a change, sir. I am here because you bade me."

"That 's true. Come in and eat your soup with us, and we 'll see what the girl says, for I have forgotten all about it."

He opened a small door which led by a narrow stair into a back street, and, shuffling along, with his hat drawn over his eyes, made for the little garden over the wooden bridge, and to his door. This he unlocked, and then bidding me follow, he ascended the stairs.

The room into which we entered was furnished in the most plain and simple fashion. A small table, with a coarse cloth and some common ware, stood ready for dinner, and a large loaf on a wooden platter, occupied the middle. There were but two places prepared; but the old man speedily arranged a third place, muttering to himself the while, but what I could not catch.

As he was thus engaged, the Fräulein entered. She was dressed in a sort of brown serge, which, though of the humblest tissue, showed her figure to great advantage, for it fitted to perfection, and designed the graceful lines of her shoulders, and her taper waist to great advantage. She saluted me with the faintest possible smile, and said: "You are come to dine with us?"

"If there be enough to give him to eat," said the old man, gruffly. "I have brought him here, however, with other thoughts. There was something said last night, — what was it, girl? — something about this lad, — do you remember it?"

"Here is the soup, father," said she, calmly. "We'll bethink us of these things by and by." There was a strange air of half-command in what she said, the tone of one who asserted a certain supremacy, as I was soon to see she did in the household. "Sit here, Herr von Owen," said she, pointing to my place, and her words were uttered like an order.

In perfect silence the meal went on; a woman-servant entering to replace the soup by a dish of boiled meat, but not otherwise waiting on us, for Sara rose and removed our plates and served us with fresh ones, — an office I would gladly have taken from her, and indeed essayed to do, but at a gesture, and a look that there was no mistaking, I sat down again, and, unmindful of my presence, they soon began to talk of business matters, in which, to my astonishment, the young girl seemed thoroughly versed. Cargoes of grain for Athens consigned to one house, were now to be transferred to some other. There were large orders from France for staves, to meet which some one should be promptly despatched into Hungary. Hemp, too, was wanted for England. There was a troublesome litigation with an Insurance Company at Marseilles, which was evidently going against the House of Oppovich. So unlike was all this the tone of dinner conversation I was used to that I listened in wonderment how they could devote the hour of social enjoyment and relaxation to details so perplexing and so vulgar.

"There is that affair of the leakage, too," cried Herr Ignaz, setting down his glass before drinking; "I had nigh forgotten it."

"I answered the letter this morning," said the girl, gravely. "It is better it should be settled at once, while the exchanges are in our favor."

"And pay — pay the whole amount," cried he, angrily.

"Pay it all," replied she, calmly. "We must not let them call us litigious, father. You have *friends* here," and she laid emphasis on the word, "that would not be grieved to see you get the name."

Twenty-seven thousand gulden!" exclaimed he, with a quivering lip. "And how am I to save money for your dowry, girl, with losses like these?"

"You forget, sir, we are not alone," said she, proudly. "This young Englishman can scarcely feel interested in these details." She arose as she spoke, and placed a few dishes of fruit on the table, and then served us with coffee; the whole done so unobtrusively and in such quiet fashion as to make her services appear a routine that could not call for remark.

"The 'Dalmat' will not take our freight," said he, suddenly. "There is some combination against us there."

"I will look to it," said she, coldly. "Will you try these figs, Herr von Owen? Fiume, they say, rivals Smyrna in purple figs."

"I will have no more to do with figs or olives either," cried out Herr Ignaz. "The English beat you down to the lowest price, and then refuse your cargo for one damaged crate. I have had no luck with England."

Unconsciously, I know it was, his eyes turned fully on me as he spoke, and there was a defiance in his look that seemed like a personal challenge.

"He does not mean it for you," said the Fräulein, gently in my ear, and her voice gained a softness I did not know it possessed.

Perhaps the old man's thoughts had taken a very gloomy turn, for he leaned his head on his hand, and seemed sunk in revery. The Fräulein rose quietly, and, beckoning me to follow her, moved noiselessly into an adjoining room. This chamber, furnished a little more tastefully, had a piano, and some books and prints lay about on the tables.

"My father likes to be left alone at times," said she, gravely; "and when you know us better, you will learn to see what these times are." She took up some needlework she had been engaged on, and sat down on a sofa. I did not well know whether to take my leave or keep her company; and while I hesitated she appeared to read my difficulty, and said, "You are free, Herr von Owen, if you have any engagement."

"I have none," said I; then remembering that the speech might mean to dismiss me, I added hastily, "but it is time to go."

"Good-bye, then," said she, making me a slight bow; and I went.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OFFICE.

On the following day the cashier sent for me to say it was Herr Oppovich's wish that I should be attached to some department in the office, till I had fully mastered its details, and then be transferred to another, and so on, till I had gradually acquainted myself with the whole business of the house. "It 's an old caprice of Herr Ignaz's," said he, "which repeated failures have not yet discouraged him with. You 're the fifth he has tried to make a supervisor of, and you 'll follow the rest."

"Is it so very difficult to learn?" asked I, modestly.

"Perhaps to one of your acquirements it might not," said he, with quiet irony, "but, for a slight example: here, in this office, we correspond with five countries in their own languages; yonder, in that room, they talk modern Greek and Albanian and Servian; there 's the Hungarian group, next that bow window, and that takes in the Lower Danube; and in what we call the Expeditions department there are fellows who speak seventeen dialects, and can write ten or twelve. So much for languages. Then what do you say to mastering — since that 's the word they have for it — the grain trade from Russia, rags from Transylvania, staves from Hungary, fruit from the Levant, cotton from Egypt, minerals from Lower Austria, and woollen fabrics from Bohemia? We do something in all of these, besides a fair share in oak bark and hemp."

"Stop, for mercy's sake!" I cried out. "It would take a lifetime to gain a mere current knowledge of these."

"Then, there 's the finance department," said he; "watching the rise and fall of the exchanges, buying and selling gold. Herr Ulrich, in that office with the blue door, could tell you it 's not to be picked up of an afternoon. Perhaps you might as well begin with him; his is not a bad school to take the fine edge off you."

"I shall do whatever you advise me."

"I 'll speak to Herr Ulrich, then," said he; and he left me, to return almost immediately, and conduct me within the precincts of the blue door.

Herr Ulrich was a tall, thin, ascetic-looking man, with his hair brushed rigidly back from the narrowest head I ever saw. His whole idea of life was the office, which he arrived at by daybreak, and never left, except to visit the Bourse, till late at night. He disliked, of all things, new faces about him; and it was a piece of malice on the cashier's part to bring me before him.

"I believed I had explained to Herr Ignaz already," said he to the cashier, "that I am not a schoolmaster."

"Well, well," broke in the other, in a muffled voice, "try the lad. He may not be so incompetent. They tell me he has had some education."

Herr Ulrich raised his spectacles, and surveyed me from head to foot for some seconds. "You have been in the yard?" said he, in question.

"Yes, sir."

"And is counting oaken staves the first step to learning foreign exchanges, think you?"

"I should say not, sir."

"I know whose scheme this is, well enough," muttered he. "I see it all. That will do. You may leave us to talk together alone," said he to the cashier. "Sit down there, lad; there 's your own famous newspaper, the 'Times.' Make me a *précis* of the money article as it touches Austrian securities and Austrian enterprises; contrast the report there given with what that French paper contains; and don't leave till it be finished." He returned to his high stool as he spoke, and resumed his work. On the table before me lay a mass of newspapers in different languages; and I sat down to examine them with the very vaguest notion of what was expected of me.

Determined to do something, — whatever that something might be, — I opened the "Times" to find out the money article; but, little versed in journalism, I turned from page to page without discovering it. At last I thought I should find it by carefully scanning the columns; and so I began at the top and read the various headings, which happened to be those of the trials then going on. There was a cause of salvage on the part of the owners of the "Lively Jane;" there was a disputed ownership of certain dock warrants for indigo, a breach of promise case, and a suit for damages for injuries incurred on the rail. None of these, certainly, were financial articles. At the head of the next column I read: "Court of Probate and Divorce, — Mr. Spanks moved that the decree *nisi*, in the suit of Cleremont *v.* Cleremont, be made absolute. Motion allowed. The damages in this suit against Sir Roger Norcott have been fixed at eight thousand five hundred pounds."

From these lines I could not turn my eyes. They revealed nothing, it is true, but what I knew well must happen; but there is that in a confirmation of a fact brought suddenly before us, that always awakens deep reflection: and now I brought up before my mind my poor mother, deserted and forsaken, and my father, ruined in character, and perhaps in fortune.

I had made repeated attempts to find out my mother's address, but all my letters had failed to reach her. Could there be any chance of discovering her through this suit? Was it possible that she might have intervened in any way in it? And, last of all, would this lawyer, whose name appeared in the proceedings, take compassion on my unhappy condition, and aid me to discover where my mother was? I meditated long over all this, and I ended by convincing myself that there are few people in the world who are not well pleased to do a kind thing which costs little in the doing; and so I resolved I would write to Mr. Spanks, and address him at the court he practised in. I could not help feeling that it was at a mere straw I was grasping; but nothing more tangible lay within my reach. I wrote thus: —

"SIR, — I am the son and only child of Sir Roger and Lady Norcott; and seeing that you have lately conducted a suit against my father, I ask you, as a great favor, to let me know where my mother is now living, that I may write to her. I know that I am taking a great liberty in obtruding this request upon you; but I am very friendless, and very little versed in worldly knowledge. Will you let both these deficiencies plead for me? and let me sign myself

"Your grateful servant,

"DIGBY NORCOTT.

"You can address me at the house of Hodnig and Oppovich, Fiume, Austria, where I am living as a clerk, and under the name of Digby Owen, — Owen being the name of my mother's family."

I was not very well pleased with the composition of this letter; but it had one recommendation, which I chiefly sought for, — it was short, and for this reason I hoped it might be favorably received. I read it over and over, each time seeing some new fault, or some omission to correct; and then I would turn again to the newspaper, and ponder over the few words that meant so much and yet revealed so little. How my mother's position would be affected — if at all — by this decision I could not tell. Indeed, it was the mere accident of hearing divorce discussed at my father's table that enabled me to know what the terms of the law implied. And thus I turned from my letter to the newspaper, and back again from the newspaper to my letter, so engrossed by the theme that I forgot where I was, and utterly forgot all about that difficult task Herr Ulrich had set me. Intense thought and weariness of mind, aided by the unbroken stillness of the place, made me heavy and drowsy. From poring over the paper, I gradually bent down till my head rested on it, and I fell sound asleep.

I must have passed hours thus, for it was already evening when I awoke. Herr Ulrich was about to leave the office, and had his hat on, as he aroused me.

"It is supper-time, youngster," said he, laying his hand on my shoulder. "Yes, you may well wonder where you are. What are you looking for?"

"I thought, sir, I had written a letter just before I fell asleep. I was writing here." And I turned over the papers and shook them, tossing them wildly about, to discover the letter, but in vain. It was not there. Could it have been that I had merely composed it in my mind, and never have committed it to paper? But that could scarcely be, seeing how fresh in my memory were all the doubts and hesitations that had beset me.

"I am sure I wrote a letter here," said I, trying to recall each circumstance to my mind.

"When you have finished dreaming, lad, I will lock the door," said he, waiting to see me pass out.

"Forgive me one moment, sir, only one," cried I, wildly, scattering the papers over the table. "It is of consequence to me — what I have written."

"That is, if you have written anything," said he, dryly.

The grave tone of this doubt determined the conflict in my mind.

"I suppose you are right," said I; "it was a dream." And I arose and followed him out.

As I reached the foot of the stairs, I came suddenly on Herr Ignaz and his daughter. It was a common thing for her to come and accompany him home at the end of the day's work; and as latterly he had become much broken and very feeble, she scarcely missed a day in this attention. "Oh, here he is!" I heard her say as I came up. What he replied I could not catch, but it was with some earnestness she rejoined,—

"Herr von Owen, my father wishes to say that they have mistaken his instructions regarding you in the office. He never expected you could at once possess yourself of all the details of a varied business; he meant that you should go about and see what branch you would like to attach yourself to, and to do this he will give you ample time. Take a week; take two; a month, if you like." And she made a little gesture of friendly adieu with her hand, and passed on.

CHAPTER XXII.

UNWISHED-FOR PROMOTION.

THE morning after this brief intimation I attached myself to that department of the house whose business was to receive and reply to telegraphic messages. I took that group of countries whose languages I knew, and addressed myself to my task in right earnest. An occupation whose chief feature is emergency will always possess a certain interest, but beyond this there was not anything attractive in my present pursuit. A peremptory message to sell this or buy that, to push on vigorously with a certain enterprise or to suspend all action in another, would perhaps form the staple of a day's work. When disasters occurred, too, it was their monetary feature alone was recorded. The fire that consumed a warehouse was told with reference to the amount insured; the shipwreck was related by incidents that bore on the lost cargo, and the damage incurred. Still it was less monotonous than the work of the office, and I had a certain pride in converting the messages — sometimes partly, sometimes totally unintelligible — into language that could be understood, that imparted a fair share of ambition to my labor.

My duty was to present myself, with my book in which I had entered the despatches, each evening, at supper-time, at Herr Ignaz's house. He would be at table with his daughter when I arrived, and the interview would pass somewhat in this wise: Herr Oppovich would take the book from my hands without a word or even a look at me, and the Fräulein, with a gentle bend of the head, but without the faintest show of more intimate greeting, would acknowledge me. She would continue to eat as I stood there, as unmindful of me as though I were a servant. Having scanned the book over, he would hand it across to his daughter, and then would ensue a few words in whisper, after which the Fräulein would write opposite each message some word of reply or of comment such as, "Already provided for," "Further details wanted," "Too late," or such like, but never more than a few words, and these she would write freely, and only consulting herself. The old man — whose memory failed him more and more every day, and whose general debility grew rapidly — did no more than glance at the answers and nod an acceptance of them. In giving the book back to me, she rarely looked up, but if she did so, and if her eyes met mine, their expression was cold and almost defiant; and thus, with a slight bend of the head, I would be dismissed.

Nor was this reception the less chilling that, before I had well closed the door, they would be in full conversation again, showing that my presence it was which had inspired the constraint and reserve. These, it might be thought, were not very proud nor blissful moments to me, and yet they formed the happiest incident of my day, and I actually longed for the hour, as might a lover to meet his mistress. To gaze at will upon her pale and beautiful face, to watch the sunlight as it played upon her golden hair, which she wore — in some fashion, perhaps, peculiar to her race — in heavy masses of curls, that fell over her back and shoulders; her hand, too, a model of symmetry, and with the fingers rose-tipped, like the goddesses of Homer, affected me as a spell; and I have stood there unconsciously staring at it till warned by a second admonition to retire.

Perhaps the solitude in which I lived helped to make me dwell more thoughtfully on this daily-recurring interview; for I went nowhere, I associated with no one, I dined alone. and my one brisk walk for health and exercise I took by myself. When evening came, and the other clerks frequented the theatre, I went home to read, or as often to sit and think.

"Sara tells me," said the old man one day, when some rare chance had brought him to my office, — "Sara tells me that you are suffering from over-confinement. She thinks you look pale and worn, and that this constant work is telling on you."

"Far from it, sir. I am both well and happy; and if I needed to be made happier, this thoughtful kindness would make me so."

"Yes; she is very kind, and very thoughtful too; but, as well as these, she is despotic," said he, with a faint laugh; "and so she has decided that you are to exchange with M. Marsac, who will be here by Saturday, and who will put you up to all the details of his walk. He buys our timber for us in Hungary and Transylvania; and he, too, will enjoy a little rest from constant travel."

"I don't speak Hungarian, sir," began I, eager to offer an opposition to the plan.

"Sara says you are a quick learner, and will soon acquire it, — at least, enough for traffic."

"It is a business, too, that I suspect requires much insight into the people and their ways."

"You can't learn them younger, lad; and as all those we deal with are old clients of the house, you will not be much exposed to rogueries."

"But if I make mistakes, sir? If I involve you in difficulty and in loss?"

"You 'll repay it by zeal, lad, and by devotion, as we have seen you do here."

He waved his hand in adieu, and left me to my own thoughts. Very sad thoughts they were, as they told me of separation from her that gave the whole charm to my life. Sara's manner to me had been so markedly cold and distant for some time past, so unlike what it had been at first, that I could not help feeling that, by ordering me away, some evidence of displeasure was to be detected. The old man I at once exculpated, for every day showed him less and less alive to the business of "the House;" though, from habit, he persisted in coming down every morning to the office, and believed himself the guide and director of all that went on there.

I puzzled myself long to think what I could have done to forfeit her favor. I had never in the slightest degree passed that boundary of deference that I was told she liked to exact from all in the service of the house. I had neglected no duty, nor, having no intimates or associates, had I given opportunity to report of me that I had said this or that of my employers. I scrutinized every act of my daily life, and suggested every possible and impossible cause for this coldness; but without approaching a reason at all probable. While I thus doubted and disputed with myself, the evening despatches arrived, and among them a letter addressed to myself. It bore the post-mark of the town alone, with this superscription, "Digby Owen, Esq., at Messrs. Oppovich's, Fiume." I tore it open and read, —

"The address you wish for is, 'Lady Norcott, Sunday's Well, Cork, Ireland.'"

The writing looked an English hand, and the language was English. There was no date, nor any signature. Could it have been, then, that I had folded and sealed and sent on my letter — that letter I believed I had never written — without knowing it, and that the lawyer had sent me this reply, which, though long delayed, might have been postponed till he had obtained the tidings it conveyed? At all events, I had got my dear mother's address, — at least I hoped so. This point I resolved to ascertain at once, and sat down to write to her. It was a very flurried note I composed, though I did my very best to be collected. I told her how and where I was, and by what accident of fortune I had come here; that I had reasonable hopes of advancement, and even now had a salary which was larger than I needed. I was afraid to say much of what I wished to tell her, till I was sure my letter would reach her; and I entreated her to write to me by return of post, were it but a line. I need not say how many loves I sent her, nor what longings to be again beside her, to hold her hand, and hear her voice, and call her by that dearest of all the names affection cherishes. "I am going from this in a few days into Hungary," added I; "but address me here, and it shall be sent after me."

When I had finished my letter, I again turned my thoughts to this strange communication, so abrupt and so short. How came it to Fiume, too? Was it enclosed in some other letter, and to whom? If posted in Fiume, why not written there? Ay; but by whom? Who could know that I had wished for my mother's address? It was a secret buried in my own heart.

I suddenly determined I would ask the Fräulein Sara to aid me in unravelling this mystery, which, of course, I could do without disclosing the contents of the note. I hurried off to the house, and asked if she would permit me to speak to her.

"Yes. The Fräulein was going out; but if my business was brief, she would see me."

She was in bonnet and shawl as I entered, and stood with one hand on a table, looking very calm but somewhat haughty.

"I beg your pardon, M. Owen," said she, "if I say that I can only give you a few minutes, and will not ask you even to sit down. If it be a matter of the office — "

"No, Mademoiselle; it is not a matter of the office — "

"Then, if it relate to your change of occupation — "

"No, Mademoiselle, not even to that. It is a purely personal question. I have got a letter, with a Fiume postmark on it, but without the writer's name; and I am curious to know if you could aid me to discover him. Would you look at the hand and see if it be known to you?"

"Pray excuse me, M. Owen. I am the stupidest of all people in reading riddles or solving difficulties. All the help I can give you is to say how I treat anonymous letters myself. If they be simply insults, I burn them. If they relate what appear to be matters of fact, I wait and watch for them."

Offended by the whole tone of her manner, I bowed, and moved towards the door.

"Have you seen M. Marsac? I hear he has arrived."

"No, Mademoiselle; not yet."

"When you have conferred and consulted with him, your instructions are all prepared; and I suppose you are ready to start?"

"I shall be, Mademoiselle, when called upon."

"I will say good-bye, then," said she, advancing one step towards me, evidently intending to offer me her hand; but I replied by a low, very low bow, and retired.

I thought I should choke as I went down the stairs. My throat seemed to swell, and then to close up; and when I gained the shelter of the thick trees, I threw myself down on my face in the grass, and sobbed as if my heart was breaking. How I vowed and swore that I would tear every recollection of her from my mind, and never think more of her, and how her image ever came back clearer and brighter and more beautiful before me after each oath!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MAN WHO TRAVELLED FOR OUR HOUSE.

As I sat brooding over my fire that same evening, my door was suddenly opened, and a large burly man, looming even larger from an immense fur pelisse that he wore, entered. His first care was to divest himself of a tall Astracan cap, from which he flung off some snow-flakes, and then to throw off his pelisse, stamping the snow from his great boots, which reached half-way up the thigh.

"You see," cried he, at last, with a jovial air, — "you see I come, like a good comrade, and make myself at home at once."

"I certainly see so much," said I, dryly; "but whom have I the honor to receive?"

"You have the honor to receive Gustave Maurice de Marsac, young man, a gentleman of Dauphiné, who now masquerades in the character of first traveller for the respectable house of Hodnig and Oppovich."

"I am proud to make your acquaintance, M. de Marsac," said I, offering my hand.

"What age are you?" cried he, staring fixedly at me. "You can't be twenty?"

"No, I am not twenty."

"And they purpose to send you down to replace *me!*" cried he; and he threw himself back in his chair, and shook with laughter.

"I see all the presumption; but I can only say it was none of my doing."

"No, no; don't say presumption," said he, in a half-coaxing tone. "But I may say it, without vanity, it is not every man's gift to be able to succeed Gustave de Marsac. May I ask for a cigar? Thanks. A real Cuban, I verily believe. I finished my tobacco two posts from this, and have been smoking all the samples — pepper and hempseed amongst them — since then."

"May I offer you something to eat?"

"You may, if you accompany it with something to drink. Would you believe it, Oppovich and his daughter were at supper when I arrived to report myself; and neither of them as much as said, Chevalier — I mean Mon. de Marsac — won't you do us the honor to join us? No. Old Ignaz went on with his meal, — cold veal and a potato salad, I think it was; and the fair Sara examined my posting-book to see I had made no delay on the road; but neither offered me even the courtesy of a glass of wine."

"I don't suspect it was from any want of hospitality," I began.

"An utter want of everything, *mon cher.* Want of decency; want of delicacy; want of due deference to a man of birth and blood. I see you are sending your servant out. Now, I beg, don't make a stranger — don't make what we call a 'Prince Russe' of me. A little quiet supper, and something to wash it down; good fellowship will do the rest. May I give your man the orders?"

"You will confer a great favor on me," said I.

He took my servant apart, and whispered a few minutes with him at the window. "Try Kleptomitz first," said he aloud, as the man was leaving; "and mind you say M. Marsac sent you. Smart 'bursche' you've got there. If you don't take him with you, hand him over to me."

"I will do so," said I; "and am happy to have secured him a good master."

"You'll not know him when you pass through Fiume again. I believe there's not my equal in Europe to drill a servant. Give me a Chinese, an Esquimau; give me a Hottentot, and in six months you shall see him announce a visitor, deliver a letter, wait at table, or serve coffee, with the quiet dignity and the impassive steadiness of the most accomplished lackey. The three servants of Fiume were made by me, and their fortunes also. One has now the chief restaurant at Rome, in the Piazza di Spagna; the other is manager of the 'Iron Crown Hotel,' at Zurich; he wished to have it called the 'Arms of Marsac,' but I forbade him. I said, 'No, Pierre, no. The De Marsacs are now travelling incog.' Like the Tavannes and the Rohans, we have to wait and bide our time. Louis Napoleon is not immortal. Do you think he is?"

"I have no reason to think so."

"Well, well, you are too young to take interest in politics; not but that *I* did at fourteen: I conspired at fourteen! I will show you a stiletto Mazzini gave me on my birthday; and the motto on the blade was, 'Au service du Roi.' Ah! you are surprised at what I tell you. I hear you say to yourself, 'How the devil did he come to this place? what led him to Fiume?' A long story that; a story poor old Dumas would give one of his eyes for. There 's more adventure, more scrapes by villany, dangers and deathblows generally, in the last twenty-two years of my life — I am now thirty-six — than in all the Monte Cristos that ever were written. I will take the liberty to put another log on your fire. What do you say if we lay the cloth? It will expedite matters a little."

"With all my heart. Here are all my household goods," said I, opening a little press in the wall.

"And not to be despised, by any means. Show me what a man drinks out of, and I 'll tell you what he drinks. When a man has got thin glasses like these, — *à la Mousseline*, as we say, — his tipple is Bordeaux."

"I confess the weakness," said I, laughing.

"It is my own infirmity too," said he, sighing. "My theory is, plurality of wines is as much a mistake as plurality of wives. Coquette, if you will, with fifty, but give your affections to one. If I am anything, I am moral. What can keep your fellow so long? I gave him but two commissions."

"Perhaps the shops were closed at this hour."

"If they were, sir," said he, pompously, "at the word 'Marsac' they would open. Ha! what do I see here? — a piano? Am I at liberty to open it?" And without waiting for a reply, he sat down, and ran his hands over the keys with a masterly facility. As he flew over the octaves, and struck chords of splendid harmony, I could not help feeling an amount of credit in all his boastful declarations just from this one trait of real power about him.

"I see you are a rare musician," said I.

"And it is what I know least," said he; "though Flotow said one day, 'If that rascal De Marsac takes to writing operas, I'll never compose another.' But here comes the supper;" and as he spoke my servant entered with a small basket with six bottles in it; two waiters following him, bearing a good-sized tin box, with a charcoal fire beneath.

"Well and perfectly done," exclaimed my guest, as he aided them to place the soup on the table, and to dispose some *hors d'œuvre* of anchovies, caviare, ham, and fresh butter on the board. "I am sorry we have no flowers. I love a bouquet. A few camellias for color, and some violets for odor. They relieve the grossness of the material enjoyments; they poetize the meal; and if you have no women at table, *mon cher*, be sure to have flowers: not that I object to both together. There, now, is our little bill of fare, — a white soup, a devilled mackerel, some truffles, with butter, and a capon with stewed mushrooms. Oysters there are none, not even those native shrimps they call scampi; but the wine will compensate for much: the wine is Rœdiger; champagne, with a faint suspicion of dryness. And as he has brought ice, we'll attack that Bordeaux you spoke of till the other be cool enough for drinking."

As he rattled on thus, it was not very easy for me to assure myself whether I was host or guest; but as I saw that this consideration did not distress *him*, I resolved it should not weigh heavily on *me*.

"I ordered a *compôte* of peaches with maraschino. Go after them and say it has been forgotten." And now, as he dismissed my servant on this errand, he sat down and served the soup, doing the honors of the board in all form. "You are called — "

"Digby is my Christian name," interrupted I, "and you can call me by it."

"Digby, I drink to your health; and if the wine had been only a little warmer, I'd say I could not wish to do so in a more generous fluid. No fellow of your age knows how to air his Bordeaux; hot flannels to the caraffe before decanting are all that is necessary, and let your glasses also be slightly warmed. To sip such claret as this, and then turn one's eyes to that champagne yonder in the ice-pail, is like the sensation of a man who in his honeymoon fancies how happy he will be one of these days, *en secondes noces.* Don't you feel a sense of triumphant enjoyment at this moment? Is there not something at your heart that says, 'Hodnig and Oppovich, I despise you! To the regions I soar in you cannot come! To the blue ether I have risen, your very vision cannot reach!' Eh, boy! tell me this."

"No; I don't think you have rightly measured my feelings. On the whole, I rather suspect I bear a very good will to these same people who have enabled me to have these comforts."

"You pretend, then, to what they call gratitude?"

"I have that weakness."

"I could as soon believe in the heathen mythology! I like the man who is kind to me while he is doing the kindness, and I could, if occasion served, be kind to him in turn; but to say that I could retain such a memory of the service after years that it would renew in me the first pleasant sensations it created, and with these sensations the good-will to requite them, is downright rubbish. You might as well tell me that I could get drunk simply by remembering the orgie I assisted at ten years ago."

"I protest against your sentiment and your logic too."

"Then we won't dispute the matter. We'll talk of something we can agree upon. Let us abuse Sara."

"If you do, you'll choose some other place to do it."

"What, do you mean to tell me that you can stand the haughty airs and proud pretensions of the young Jewess?"

"I mean to tell you that I know nothing of the Fräulein Oppovich but what is amiable and good."

"What do I care for amiable and good? I want a girl to be graceful, well-mannered, pleasing, lively to talk, and eager to listen. There, now, don't get purple about the cheeks, and flash at me such fiery looks. Here's the champagne, and we'll drink a bumper to her."

"Take some other name for your toast, or I 'll fling your bottle out of the window."

"You will, will you!" said he, setting down his glass, and measuring me from head to foot.

"I swear it."

"I like that spirit, Digby; I 'll be shot if I don't," said he, taking my hand, which I did not give very willingly. "You are just what I was some fifteen or twenty years ago, — warm, impulsive, and headstrong. It 's the world — that vile old mill, the world — grinds that generous nature out of one! I declare I don't believe that a spark of real trustfulness survives a man's first moustaches, — and yours are very faint, very faint indeed; there 's a suspicion of smut on the upper lip, and some small capillary flourishes along your cheek. That wine is too sweet. I 'll return to the Bordeaux."

"I grieve to say I have no more than that bottle of it. It was some I bought when I was ill and threatened with ague."

"What profanation! anything would be good enough for ague. It is in a man's days of vigorous health he merits cherishing. Let us console ourselves with Rœdiger. Now, boy," said he, as he cleared off a bumper from a large goblet, "I 'll give you some hints for your future, far more precious than this wine, good as it is. Gustave de Marsac, like Homer's hero, can give gold for brass, and instead of wine he will give you wisdom. First of all for a word of warning: don't fall in love with Sara. It 's the popular error down here to do so, but it 's a cruel mistake. That fellow that has the hemp-trade here, — what 's his name, — the vulgar dog that wears mutton-chop whiskers, and fancies he 's English because he gets his coats from London? I 'll remember his name presently, — he has all his life been proposing for Sara, and begging off — as matters go ill or well with the House of Oppovich; and as he is a shrewd fellow in business, all the young men here think they ought to 'go in' for Sara too."

I should say here that, however distasteful to me this talk, and however willingly I would have repressed it, it was totally out of my power to arrest the flow of words which with the force of a swollen torrent came from him. He drank freely, too, large goblets of champagne as he talked, and to this, I am obliged to own, I looked as my last hope of being rid of him. I placed every bottle I possessed on the table, and, lighting my cigar, resigned myself, with what patience I could, to the result.

"Am I keeping you up, my dear Digby?" cried he, at last, after a burst of abuse on Fiume and all it contained that lasted about half an hour.

"I seldom sit up so late," was my cautious reply; "but I must own I have seldom such a good excuse."

"You hit it, boy; that was well and truly spoken. As a talker of the highest order of talk, I yield to no man in Europe. Do you remember Duvergier saying in the Chambre, as an apology for being late, 'I dined with De Marsac'?"

"I cannot say I remember that."

"How could you? You were an infant at the time." Away he went after this into reminiscences of political life, — how deep he was in that Spanish marriage question, and how it caused a breach, — an irreparable breach between Guizot and himself, when that woman, "you know whom I mean, let out the secret to Bulwer. Of course I ought not to have confided it to her. I know all that as well as you can tell it me, but who is wise, who is guarded, who is self-possessed at all times?"

Not entirely trustful of what he was telling me, and little interested in it besides, I brought him back to Fiume, and to the business that was now about to be confided to me.

"Ah, very true; you want your instructions. You shall have them, not that you 'll need them long, *mon cher*. Six months — what am I saying? — three will see it all up with Hodnig and Oppovich."

"What do you mean?" cried I, eagerly.

"Just simply what I say."

It was not very easy for me to follow him here, but I could gather, amidst a confused mass of self-glorification, prediction, and lamentation over warnings disregarded, and such like, that the great Jew house of "Nathanheimer" of Paris was the real head of the firm of Hodnig and Oppovich.

"The Nathanheimers own all Europe and a very considerable share of America," burst he out. "You hear of a great wine-house at Xeres, or a great corn-merchant at Odessa, or a great tallow-exporter at Riga. It 's all Nathanheimer! If a man prospers and shows that he has skill in business, they 'll stand by him, even to millions. If he blunders, they sweep him away, as I brush away that cork. There must be no failures with *them*. That 's their creed."

He proceeded to explain how these great potentates of finance and trade had agencies in every great centre of Europe, who reported to them everything that went on, who flourished, and who foundered; how, when enterprises that promised well presented themselves, Nathanheimer would advance any sum, no matter how great, that was wanted. If a country needed a railroad, if a city required a boulevard, if a seaport wanted a dock, they were ready to furnish each and all of them. The conditions, too, were never unfair, never ungenerous, but still they bargained always for something besides money. They desired that this man would aid such a project here, or oppose that other there. Their interests were so various and widespread that they needed political power everywhere, and they had it.

One offence they never pardoned, never condoned, which was any, the slightest, insubordination amongst those they supported and maintained. Marsac ran over a catalogue of those they had ruined in London, Amsterdam, Paris, Frankfort, and Vienna, simply because they had attempted to emancipate themselves from the serfdom imposed upon them. Let one of the subordinate firms branch out into an enterprise unauthorized by the great house, and straightway their acceptances become dishonored, and their credit assailed. In one word, he made it appear that from one end of Europe to the other the whole financial system was in the hands of a few crafty men of immense wealth, who unthroned dynasties, and controlled the fate of nations, with a word.

He went on to show that Oppovich had somehow fallen into disgrace with these mighty patrons. "Some say that he is too old and too feeble for business, and hands over to Sara details that she is quite unequal to deal with; some aver that he has speculated without sanction, and is intriguing with Greek democrats; others declare that he has been merely unfortunate; at all events, his hour has struck. Mind my words, three months hence they 'll not have Nathanheimer's agency in their house, and I suspect you 'll see our friend Bettmeyer will succeed to that rich inheritance."

Rambling on, now talking with a vagueness that savored of imbecility, now speaking with a purposelike acuteness and power that brought conviction, he sat till daybreak, drinking freely all the time, and at last so overwhelming me with strange revelations that I was often at a loss to know whether it was he that was confounding me, or that I myself had lost all control of right reason and judgment.

"You 're dead beat, my poor fellow," said he at last, "and it 's your own fault. You 've been drinking nothing but water these last two hours. Go off to bed now, and leave me to finish this bottle. After that I 'll have a plunge off the end of the mole, cold enough it will be, but no ice, and you 'll find me here at ten o'clock with a breakfast appetite that will astonish you."

I took him at his word, and said "Good-night."

CHAPTER XXIV.

MY INSTRUCTIONS.

My friend did not keep his self-made appointment with me at breakfast, nor did I see him for two days, when we met in the street.

"I have gone over to the enemy," said he; "I have taken an engagement with Bettmeyer: six thousand florins and all expenses, — silver florins, *mon cher;* and if you 're wise," added he in a whisper, "you 'll follow my lead. Shall I say a word for you?"

I thanked him coldly, and declined the offer.

"All right; stick to gratitude, and you 'll see where it will land you," said he, gayly. "I 've sent you half a dozen letters to friends of mine up yonder;" and he pointed towards the North. "You 'll find Hunyadi an excellent fellow, and the Countess charming; don't make love to her, though, for Tassilo is a regular Othello. As for the Erdödis, I only wish I was going there, instead of you; — such pheasants, such women, such Tokay, their own vintage! Once you 're down in Transylvania, write me word whom you 'd like to know. They 're all dear friends of mine. By the way, don't make any blunder about that Hunyadi contract. The people here will want you to break it, — don't, on any account. It 's the finest bargain ever was made; splendid timber, magnificent bark, and the cuttings alone worth all the money."

He rattled out this with his own headlong speed, and was gone before I well knew I had seen him.

That evening I was ordered to Herr Oppovich's house to receive my last instructions. The old man was asleep on a sofa, as I entered, and Sara seated at a table by the fire, deeply engaged in accounts.

"Sit down, Herr Owen," — she had ceased to call me Von Owen, — "and I will speak to you in a minute."

I was not impatient at the delay, for I had time to gaze at her silken hair, and her faultless profile, and the beautiful outline of her figure, as, leaning her head on her hand, she bent over the table.

"I cannot make this come right, — are you clever at figures?" asked she.

"I cannot say it is my gift, but I will do my best to aid you." And now we were seated side by side, poring over the same page; and as she had placed one taper finger next the column of figures, I did so likewise, thinking far less of the arithmetic than of the chance of touching her hand with mine.

"These figures are somewhat confusing," she said. "Let us begin at the top, — fourteen hundred and six hundred, make two thousand, and twelve hundred, three thousand two hundred, — now is this a seven or a three?"

"I'd say a three."

"I've called it a seven, because M. Marsac usually writes his sevens in this way."

"These are De Marsac's, then?" asked I.

"And why 'De,' may I ask?" said she, quickly; "why not Marsac, as I called him?"

"I took his name as he gave it me."

"You know him, then? Oh, I had forgotten, — he called on you the night he came. Have you seen him since?"

"Only passingly, in the street."

"Had he time to tell you that he has been dismissed?"

"Yes; he said he was now in Mr. Bettmeyer's office."

"Shall I tell you why?" She stopped, and her cheek became crimson, while her eyes sparkled with an angry fire that actually startled me. "But let us finish this. Where were we?" She now leaned her head down upon her hands, and seemed overcome by her emotion. When she looked up again, her face was perfectly pale, and her eyes sad and weariful. "I am afraid we shall wake him," said she, looking towards her father; "come into this room here. So this man has been talking of us?" cried she, as soon as we had passed into the adjoining room. "Has he told you how he has requited all my father's kindness? how he has repaid his trustfulness and faith in him? Speak freely if you wish me to regard you as a friend."

"I would that you might, Fräulein. There is no name I would do so much to win."

"But you are a gentleman, and with noble blood. Could you stoop to be the friend of — " Here she hesitated, and, after an effort, added, "A Jew?"

"Try me, prove me," said I, stooping till my lips touched her hand.

She did not withdraw her hand, but left it in mine, as I pressed it again and again to my lips.

"He told you, then," said she, in a half-whisper, "that our house was on the brink of ruin; that in a few weeks, or even less, my father would not face the exchange, — did he not say this?"

"I will tell you all," said I, "for I know you will forgive me when I repeat what will offend you to hear, but what is safer you should hear." And, in the fewest words I could, I related what Marsac had told me of the house and its difficulties. When I came to that part which represented Oppovich as the mere agent of the great Parisian banker, — whose name I was not quite sure of, — I faltered and hesitated.

"Go on," said she, gently. "He told you that Baron Nathanheimer was about to withdraw his protection from us?"

I slightly bent my head in affirmation.

"But did he say why?"

"Something there was of rash enterprise, of speculation unauthorized — of — "

"Of an old man with failing faculties," said she, in the same low tone; "and of a young girl, little versed in business, but self-confident and presumptuous enough to think herself equal to supply his place. I have no doubt he was very frank on this head. He wrote to Baron Elias, who sent me his letter, — the letter he wrote of us while eating our bread. It was not handsome of him, — was it, sir?"

I can give no idea, not the faintest, of the way she said these few words, nor of the ineffable scorn of her look, while her voice remained calm and gentle as ever.

"No; it was not handsome."

She nodded to me to proceed, and I continued, —

"I have told you nearly everything; for of himself and his boastfulness — "

"Oh! do not tell me of that. I am in no laughing mood, and I would not like to hear of it. What did he say of the Hunyadi affair?"

"Nothing, or next to nothing. He offered me letters of introduction to Count Hunyadi; but beyond that there was no mention of him."

She arose as I said this, and walked slowly up and down the room. I saw she was deep in thought, and was careful not to disturb or distract her. At last she opened a writing-desk, and took out a roll of papers fastened by a tape.

"These," said she, "you will take with you, and carefully read over. They are the records of a transaction that is now involving us in great trouble, and which may prove more than trouble. M. Marsac has been induced — how, we shall not stop to inquire — to contract for the purchase of an extensive wood belonging to Graf Hunyadi; the price, half a million of francs. We delayed to ratify an agreement of such moment, until more fully assured of the value of the timber; and while we deliberated on the choice of the person to send down to Hungary, we have received from our correspondent at Vienna certain bills for acceptance in payment of this purchase. You follow me, don't you?"

"Yes. As I understand it, the bargain was assumed to be ratified?"

"Just so."

She paused; and, after a slight struggle with herself, went on, —

"The contract, legally drawn up and complete in every way, *was* signed; not, however, by my father, but by my brother. You have heard, perhaps, that I have a brother. Bad companionship and a yielding disposition have led him into evil, and for some years we have not seen him. Much misfortune has befallen him; but none greater, perhaps, than his meeting with Marsac; for, though Adolf has done many things, he would not have gone thus far without the promptings of this bad man."

"Was it his own name he wrote?" asked I.

"No; it was my father's," and she faltered at the word; and as she spoke it, her head fell heavily forward, and she covered her face with her hands.

She rallied, however, quickly, and went on. "We now know that the timber is not worth one-fourth of this large sum. Baron Elias himself has seen it, and declares that we have been duped or — worse. He insists that we rescind the contract, or accept all its consequences. The one is hopeless, — the other ruin. Meanwhile, the Baron suspends farther relations with us, and heavy acceptances of ours will soon press for payment. I must not go into this," said she, hurriedly. "You are very young to charge with such a mission; but I have great faith in your loyalty. You will not wrong our trust?"

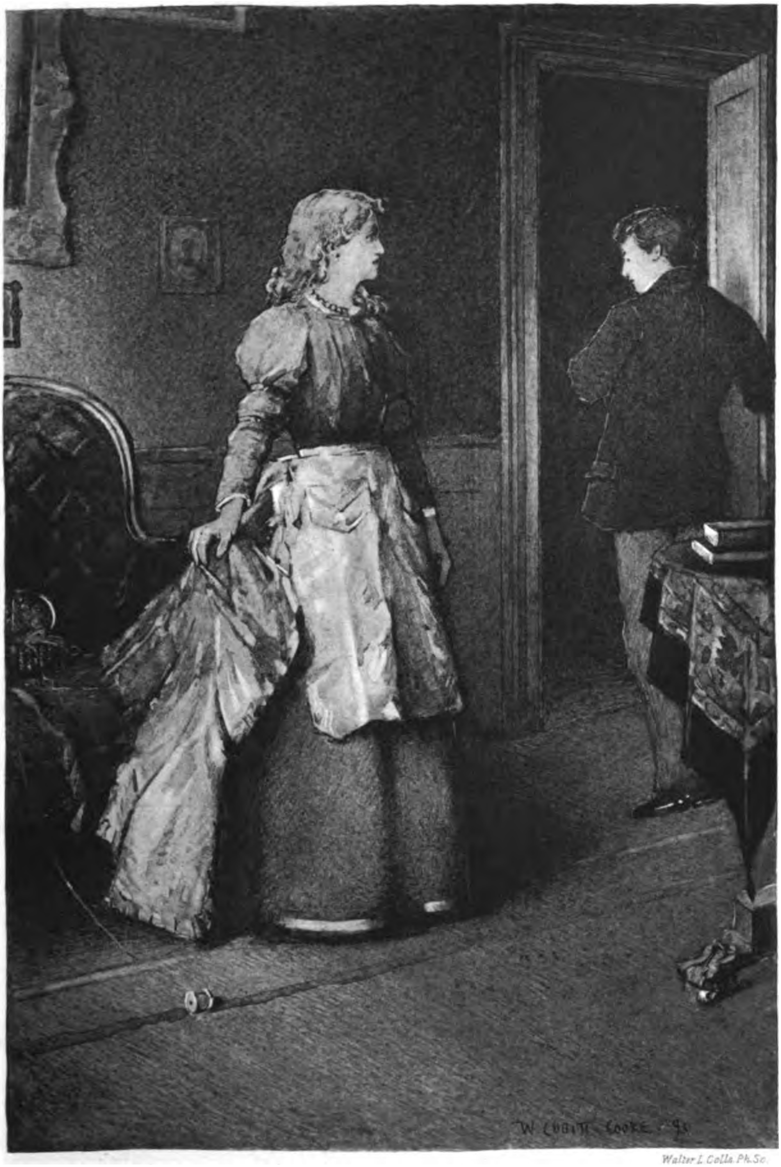
"That I will not."

"You will go to Graf Hunyadi, and speak with him. If he be — as many of his countrymen are — a man of high and generous feeling, he will not bring ruin upon us, when our only alternative would be to denounce our own. You are very young; but you have habits of the world and society. Nay, — I am not seeking to learn a secret; but you know enough to make you companionable and acceptable, where any others in our employ would be inadmissible. At all events, you will soon see the sort of man we have to deal with, and you will report to me at once."

"I am not to tell him how this signature has been obtained?" asked I, awaiting the reply.

"That would be to denounce the contract at once," cried she, as though this thought had for the first time struck her. "You know the penalty of a forgery here. It is the galleys for life. He must be saved at all events. Don't you see," cried she, eagerly, "I can give you no instructions. I have none to give. When I say I trust you, — I have told you all."

"Has Herr Ignaz not said how he would wish me to act?"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Walter L. Colls Ph.Sc.

Parting with Fräulein Sara.

"My father knows nothing of it all! Nothing. You have seen him, and you know how little he is able now to cope with a difficulty. The very sense that his faculties are not what they were overcomes him, even to tears."

Up to this she had spoken with a calm firmness that had lent a touch of almost sternness to her manner, but at the mention of her poor father's condition, her courage gave way, and she turned away and hid her face, but her convulsed shoulders showed how her emotion was overcoming her. I went towards her, and took her hand in both my own. She left it to me while I kissed it again and again.

"Oh, Sara," I whispered rather than spoke, "if you knew how devoted I am to you, if you knew how willingly I would give my very life for you, you would not think yourself friendless at this hour. Your trust in me has made me forget how lonely I am, and how humble, — to forget all that separates us, even to telling that I love you. Give me one word — only one — of hope; or if not that, let your dear hand but close on mine, and I am yours forever."

She never spoke, however, and her cold fingers returned no pressure to mine.

"I love you; I love you!" I muttered, as I covered her hand with kisses.

"There! Do you not hear?" cried she, suddenly. "My father is calling me."

"Sara, Sara! Where is Sara?" cried the old man, in a weak, reedy voice.

"I am coming, dear father," said she. "Good-bye, Digby; remember that I trust you!"

She waved me a farewell, and, with a faint, sad smile, she moved away. As she reached the door, however, she turned, and, with a look of kindly meaning, said, "Trust you in all things."

I sprang forward to clasp her to my heart; but the door closed on her, and I was alone.

CHAPTER XXV.

"ON THE ROAD" IN CROATIA.

I PASSED half the night that followed in writing to my mother. It was a very long epistle, but, in my fear lest, like so many others, it should not ever reach her, it was less expansive and candid than I could have wished. Sara's name did not occur throughout, and yet it was Sara's image was before me as I wrote, and to connect my mother in interest for Sara was my uppermost thought. Without touching on details that might awaken pain, I told how I had been driven to attempt something for my own support, and had not failed.

"I am still," I wrote, "where I started, but in so far a different position that I am now well looked on and trusted, and at this moment about to set out on a mission of importance. If I should succeed in doing what I am charged with, it will go far to secure my future, and then, dearest mother, I will go over to fetch you, for I will no longer live without you."

I pictured the place I was living in, and its climate, as attractively as I was able, and said, what I verily believed, that I hoped never to leave it. Of my father I did not venture to speak; but I invited her, if the course of our correspondence should prove assured, to tell me freely all about her present condition, and where and how she was.

"You will see, dear mother," said I, in conclusion, "that I write in all the constraint of one who is not sure who may read him. Of the accident by which the address I now give this letter reached me, I will tell when I write again. Meanwhile, though I shall not be here to receive it at once, write to me, to the care of Hodnig and Oppovich, and add, 'to be forwarded.'"

I enclosed a little photograph of the town, as seen from the bay, and though ill done and out of drawing, it still conveyed some notion of the pretty spot with its mountain framework.

I had it in my head to write another letter, and, indeed, made about a dozen attempts to begin it. It was to Pauline. Nothing but very boyishness could have ever conceived such a project, but I thought — it was very simple of me! — I thought I owed it to her, and to my own loyalty, to declare that my heart had wandered from its first allegiance, and fixed its devotion on another. I believed — I was young enough to believe it — that I had won her affections, and I felt it would be dishonorable in me to deceive her as to my own. I suppose I was essaying a task that would have puzzled a more consummate tactician than myself, for certainly nothing could be more palpable than my failures; and though I tried, with all the ingenuity I possessed, to show that in my altered fortunes I could no longer presume to retain any hold on her affections, somehow it would creep out that my heart had opened to a sentiment far deeper and more enthralling than that love which began in a polka and ended at the railway.

I must own I am now grateful to my stupidity and ineptness, which saved me from committing this great blunder, though at the time I mourned over my incapacity, and bewailed the dulness that destroyed every attempt I made to express myself gracefully. I abandoned the task at length in despair, and set to work to pack up for my journey. I was to start at daybreak for Agram, where some business would detain me a couple of days. Thence I was to proceed to a small frontier town in Hungary, called Ostovich, on the Drave, where we owned a forest of oak scrub, and which I was empowered to sell, if an advantageous offer could be had. If such should not be forthcoming, my instructions were to see what water-power existed in the neighborhood to work saw-mills, and to report fully on the price of labor, and the means of conveyance to the coast. If I mention these details, even passingly, it is but to show the sort of work that was intrusted to me, and how naturally my pride was touched at feeling how great and important were the interests confided to my judgment. In my own esteem, at least, I was somebody. This sentiment, felt in the freshness of youth, is never equalled by anything one experiences of triumph in after life, for none of our later successes come upon hearts joyous in the day-spring of existence, hopeful of all things, and, above all, hearts that have not been jarred by envy and made discordant by ungenerous rivalry.

There was an especial charm, too, in the thought that my life was no every-day common-place existence, but a strange series of ups and downs, changes and vicissitudes, calling for continual watchfulness, and no small amount of energy; in a word, I was a hero to myself, and it is wonderful what a degree of interest can be imparted to life simply by that delusion. My business at Agram was soon despatched. No news of the precarious condition of our "house" had reached this place, and I was treated with all the consideration due to the confidential agent of a great firm. I passed an evening in the society of the town, and was closely questioned whether Carl Bettmeyer had got over his passion for the Fräulein Sara; or was she showing any disposition to look more favorably on his addresses. What fortune Oppovich could give his daughter, and what sort of marriage he aspired to for her, were all discussed. There was one point, however, all were agreed upon, that nothing could be done without the consent of the "Baron," as they distinctively called the great financier of Paris, whose sway, it appeared, extended not only to questions of trade and money, but to every relation of domestic life.

"They say," cried one, "that the Baron likes Bettmeyer, and has thrown some good things in his way of late."

"He gave him a share in that new dock contract at Pola."

"And he means to give him the directorship of the Viecovar line, if it ever be made."

"He'll give him Sara Oppovich for a wife," said a third, "and that's a better speculation than them all. Two millions of florins at least."

"She's the richest heiress in Croatia."

"And does n't she know it!" exclaimed another. "The last time I was up at Fiume, old Ignaz apologized for not presenting me to her, by saying, 'Yesterday was her reception day; if you are here next Wednesday, I'll introduce you.'"

"I thought it was only the nobles had the custom of reception days?"

"Wealth is nobility nowadays; and if Ignaz Oppovich was not a Jew, he might have the best blood of Austria for a son-in-law."

The discussion soon waxed warm as to whether Jews did or did not aspire to marriage with Christians of rank, the majority opining to believe that they placed title and station above even riches, and that no people had such an intense appreciation of the value of condition as the Hebrew.

"That Frenchman who was here the other day, Marsac, told me that the man who could get the Stephen Cross for old Oppovich, and the title of Chevalier, would be sure of his daughter's hand in marriage."

"And does old Ignaz really care for such a thing?"

"No, but the girl does; she's the haughtiest and the vainest damsel in the province."

It may be believed that I found it very hard to listen to such words as these in silence, but it was of the last importance that I should not make what is called an *éclat*, or bring the name of Oppovich needlessly forward for town talk and discussion; I therefore repressed my indignation and appeared to take little interest in the conversation.

"You've seen the Fräulein, of course?" asked one of me.

"To be sure he has, and has been permitted to kneel and kiss her hand on her birthday," broke in another.

And while some declared that this was mere exaggeration and gossip, others averred that they had been present and witnessed this act of homage themselves.

"What has this young gentleman seen of this hand-kissing?" said a lady of the party, turning to me.

"That it was always an honor conferred even more than a homage rendered, Madam," said I, stepping forward and kissing her hand; and a pleasant laughter greeted this mode of concluding the controversy.

"I have got a wager about you," said a young man to me. "and you alone can decide it. Are you or are you not from Upper Austria?"

"And are you a Jew?" cried another.

"If you'll promise to ask me no more questions, I'll answer both of these, — I am neither Jew nor Austrian."

It was not, however, so easy to escape my questioners; but as their curiosity seemed curbed by no reserves of delicacy, I was left free to defend myself as best I might, and that I had not totally failed, I gathered from hearing an old fellow whisper to another, —

"You 'll get nothing out of him: if he's not a Jew by birth, he has lived long enough with them to keep his mind to himself."

Having finished all I had to do at Agram, I started for Ostovitz. I could find no purchaser for our wood; indeed every one had timber to sell, and forests were offered me on all sides. It was just at that period in Austria when the nation was first waking to thoughts of industrial enterprise, and schemes of money-getting were rife everywhere; but such was the ignorance of the people, so little versed were they in affairs, that they imagined wealth was to pour down upon them for the wishing, and that Fortune asked of her votaries neither industry nor thrift.

Perhaps I should not have been led into these reflections here if it were not that I had embodied them, or something very like them, in a despatch I sent off to Sara, — a despatch on which I had expended all my care to make it a masterpiece of fine writing and acute observation. I remember how I expatiated on the disabilities of race, and how I dwelt upon the vices of those lethargic temperaments of Eastern origin which seemed so wanting in all that energy and persistence which form the life of commerce.

This laborious essay took me an entire day to write; but when I had posted it at night, I felt I had done a very grand thing, not only as an intellectual effort, but as a proof to the Fräulein how well I knew how to restrict myself within the limits of my duties; for not a sentence, not a syllable, had escaped me throughout to recall thoughts of anything but business. I had asked for certain instructions about

Hungary, and on the third day came the following, in Sara's hand: —

"HERR DIGBY, — There is no mention in your esteemed letter of the 4th November of Kraus's acceptance, nor have you explained to what part of Heydäger's contract Hauser now objects. Freights are still rising here, and it would be imprudent to engage in any operations that involve exportation. Gold is also rising, and the Bank discount goes daily higher. I am obliged to you for your interesting remarks on ethnology, though I am low-minded enough to own, I could have read with more pleasure whether the floods in the Drave have interfered with the rafts, and also whether these late rains have damaged the newly sown crops.

"If you choose to see Pesth and Buda, you will have time, for Count Hunyadi will not be at his chateau till nigh Christmas; but it is important you should see him immediately on his arrival, for his intendant writes to say that the Graf has invited a large party of friends to pass the festival with him, and will not attend to any business matters while they remain. Promptitude will be therefore needful. I have nothing to add to your instructions already given. Although I have not been able to consult my father, whose weakness is daily greater, I may say that you are empowered to make a compromise, if such should seem advisable, and your drafts shall be duly honored, if, time pressing, you are not in a position to acquaint us with details.

"The weather here is fine now. I passed yesterday at Abazzia, and the place was looking well. I believe the Archduke will purchase it, and, though sorry on some accounts, I shall be glad on the whole.

"For Hodnig and Oppovich,
"SARA OPPOVICH.

"Of course, if Count Hunyadi will not transact business on his arrival, you will have to await his convenience. Perhaps the interval could be profitably passed in Transylvania, where, it is said, the oak-bark is both cheap and good. See to this, if opportunity serves. Bieli's book and maps are worth consulting."

If I read this epistle once, I read it fifty times, but I will not pretend to say with what strange emotions. All the dry reference to business I could bear well enough, but the little passing sneer at what she called my ethnology piqued me painfully. Why should she have taken such pains to tell me that nothing that did not lend itself to gain could have any interest for her? or was it to say that these topics alone were what should be discussed between us? Was it to recall me to my station, to make me remember in what relation I stood to her, she wrote thus? These were not the natures I had read of in Balzac! the creatures all passion and soul and sentiment, — women whose atmosphere was positive enchantment, and whose least glance or word or gesture would inflame the heart to very madness; and yet was it not in Sara to become all this? Were those deep lustrous eyes, that looked away into space longingly, dreamfully, dazingly,— were they meant to pore over wearisome columns of dry arithmetic, or not rather to give back in recognition what they had got in rapture, and to look as they were looked into?

Was it, as a Jewess, that my speculations about race had offended her? Had I expressed myself carelessly or ill? I had often been struck by a smile she would give, — not scornful, nor slighting, but something that seemed to say, "These thoughts are not *our* thoughts, nor are these ways our ways!" but in her silent fashion she would make no remark, but be satisfied to shadow forth some half dissent by a mere trembling of the lip.

She had passed a day at Abazzia — of course, alone — wandering about that delicious spot, and doubtless recalling memories for any one of which I had given my life's blood. And would she not bestow a word — one word — on these? Why not say she as much as remembered me; that it was there we first met! Sure, so much might have been said, or at least hinted at, in all harmlessness! I had done nothing, written nothing, to bring rebuke upon me. I had taken no liberty; I had tried to make the dry detail of a business letter less wearisome by a little digression, not wholly out of *apropos;* that was all.

Was then the Hebrew heart bent sorely on gain? And yet what grand things did the love of these women inspire in olden times, and what splendid natures were theirs! How true and devoted, how self-sacrificing! Sara's beautiful face, in all its calm loveliness, rose before me as I thought these things, and I felt that I loved her more than ever.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN HUNGARY.

It still wanted several weeks of Christmas, and so I hastened off to Pesth and tried to acquire some little knowledge of Hungarian, and some acquaintance with the habits and ways of Hungarian life. I am not sure that I made much progress in anything but the *csardas*, — the national dance, — in which I soon became a proficient. Its stately solemnity suddenly changing for a lively movement; its warlike gestures and attitudes; its haughty tramp and defiant tone; and, last of all, its whirlwind impetuosity and passion, — all emblems of the people who practise it, — possessed a strange fascination for me; and I never missed a night of those public balls where it was danced.

Towards the middle of December, however, I bethought me of my mission, and set out for Gross Wardein, which lay a long distance off, near the Transylvanian frontier. I had provided myself with one of the wicker carriages of the country, and travelled post, usually having three horses harnessed abreast; or, where there was much uphill, a team of five.

I mention this, for I own that the exhilaration of speeding along at the stretching gallop of these splendid *juckers*, tossing their wild names madly, and ringing out their myriads of bells, was an ecstasy of delight almost maddening. Over and over, as the excited driver would urge his beasts to greater speed by a wild shrill cry, have I yelled out in concert with him, carried away by an intense excitement I could not master.

On the second day of the journey we left the region of roads, and usually directed our course by some church spire or tower in the distance, or followed the bank of a river, when not too devious. This headlong swoop across fields and prairies, dashing madly on in what seemed utter recklessness, was glorious fun; and when we came to cross the small bridges which span the streams, without rail or parapet at either side, and where the deviation of a few inches would have sent us headlong into the torrent beneath, I felt a degree of blended terror and delight such as one experiences in the mad excitement of a fox-hunt.

On the third morning I discovered, on awaking, that a heavy fall of snow had occurred during the night, and we were forced to take off our wheels and place the carriage on sledge-slides. This alone was wanting to make the enjoyment perfect, and our pace from this hour became positively steeple-chasing. Lying back in my ample fur mantle, and my hands enclosed in a fur muff, I accepted the salutations of the villagers as we swept along, or blandly raised my hand to my cap as some wearied guard would hurriedly turn out to present arms to a supposed "magnate;" for we were long out of the beat of usual travel, and rarely any but some high official of the State was seen to come "extra post," as it is called, through these wild regions.

Up to Izarous the country had been a plain, slightly, but very slightly, undulating. Here, however, we got amongst the mountains, and the charm of scenery was now added to the delight of the pace. On the fifth day I learned, and not without sincere regret, that we were within seven German miles — something over thirty of ours — from Gross Wardein, from which the Hunyadi Schloss only lay about fifty miles.

Up to this I had been, to myself at least, a *grand seigneur* travelling for his pleasure, careless of cost, and denying himself nothing; splendid generosity, transmitted from each postilion to his successor, secured me the utmost speed his beasts could master, and the impetuous dash with which we spun into the arched doorways of the inns, routed the whole household, and not unfrequently summoned the guests themselves to witness the illustrious arrival. A few hours more and the grand illusion would dissolve! No more the wild stretching gallop, cutting the snowdrift; no more the clear bells, ringing through the frosty air; no more the eager landlord bustling to the carriage-side with his flagon of heated wine; no more that burning delight imparted by speed, a sense of power that actually intoxicates. Not one of these! A few hours more and I should be Herr Owen, travelling for the house of Hodnig and Oppovich, banished to the company of bagmen, and reduced to a status where whatever life has of picturesque or graceful is made matter for vulgar sarcasm and ridicule. I know well, ye gentlemen who hold a station fixed and unassailable will scarcely sympathize with me in all this; but the castle-builders of this world — and, happily, they are a large class — will lend me all their pity, well aware that so long as imagination honors the drafts upon her, the poor man is never bankrupt, and that it is only as illusions dissolve he sees his insolvency.

I reached Gross Wardein to dinner, and passed the night there, essaying, but with no remarkable success, to learn something of Count Hunyadi, his habits, age, temper, and general demeanor. As my informants were his countrymen, I could only gather that his qualities were such as Hungarians held in esteem. He was proud, brave, costly in his mode of life, splendidly hospitable, and a thorough sportsman. As to what he might prove in matters of business, if he would even stoop to entertain such at all, none could say; the very thought seemed to provoke a laugh.

"I once attempted a deal with him," said an old farmer-like man at the fireside. "I wanted to buy a team of *juckers* he drove into the yard here, and was rash enough to offer five hundred florins for what he asked eight. He did not even vouchsafe me an answer, and almost drove over me the next day as I stood at the side of the gate there."

"That was like Tassilo," said a Hungarian, with flashing eyes.

"He served you right," cried another. "None but a German would have offered him such a rudeness."

"Not but he 's too ready with his heavy whip," muttered an old soldier-like fellow. "He might chance to strike where no words would efface the welt."

Stories of Hunyadi's extravagance and eccentricity now poured in on all sides. How he had sold an estate to pay the cost of an imperial visit that lasted a week; how he had driven a team of four across the Danube on the second day of the frost, when a heavy man could have smashed the ice by a stamp of his foot; how he had killed a boar in single combat, though it cost him three fingers of his left hand, and an awful flesh wound in the side; and numberless other feats of daring and recklessness were recorded by admiring narrators, who finished by a loud *Elyen* to his health.

I am not sure that I went away to my bed feeling much encouraged at the success of my mission, or very hopeful of what I should do with this magnate of Hungary.

By daybreak I was again on the road. The journey led through a wild mountain pass, and was eminently interesting and picturesque; but I was no longer so open to enjoyment as before, and serious thoughts of my mission now oppressed me, and I grew more nervous and afraid of failure. If this haughty Graf were the man they represented him, it was just as likely he would refuse to listen to me at all; nor was the fact a cheering one that my client was a Jew, since nowhere is the race less held in honor than in Hungary.

As day began to decline, we issued forth upon a vast plain into which a mountain spur projected like a bold promontory beside the sea. At the very extremity of this, a large mass, which might be rock, seemed to stand out against the sky. "There, — yonder," said the postilion, pointing towards it with his whip; "that is Schloss Hunyadi. There's three hours' good gallop yet before us."

A cold snowdrift borne on a wind that at times brought us to a standstill, or even drove us to seek shelter by the wayside, now set in, and I was fain to roll myself in my furs and lie snugly down on the hay in the *wagen*, where I soon fell asleep; and though we had a change of horses, and I must have managed somehow to settle with the postilion and hand him his *trink-geld*, I was conscious of nothing till awakened by the clanking sound of a great bell, when I started up and saw we had driven into a spacious courtyard in which, at an immense fire, a number of people were seated, while others bustled about, harnessing or unharnessing horses. "Here we are, Herr Graf!" cried my postilion, who called me Count in recognition of the handsome way in which I had treated his predecessor. "This is Schloss Hunyadi."

CHAPTER XXVII.

SCHLOSS HUNYADI.

When I had made known my rank and quality, I was assigned a room — a very comfortable one — in one wing of the castle, and no more notice taken of me than if I had been a guest at an inn. The house was filled with visitors; but the master, with some six or seven others, was away in Transylvania boar-shooting. As it was supposed he would not return for eight or ten days, I had abundant time to look about me, and learn something of the place and the people.

Schloss Hunyadi dated from the fifteenth century, although now a single square tower was all that remained of the early building. Successive additions had been made in every imaginable taste and style, till the whole presented an enormous incongruous mass, in which fortress, farmhouse, convent, and palace struggled for the mastery, size alone giving an air of dignity to what numberless faults would have condemned as an outrage on all architecture.

If there was deformity and ugliness without, there was, however, ample comfort and space within. Above two hundred persons could be accommodated beneath the roof, and half as many more had been occasionally stowed away in the out-buildings. I made many attempts, but all unsuccessfully, to find out what number of servants the household consisted of. Several wore livery, and many — especially such as waited on guests humble as myself — were dressed in blouse, with the crest of the house embroidered on the breast; while a little army of retainers in Jäger costume, or in the picturesque dress of the peasantry, lounged about the courtyard, lending a hand to unharness or harness a team, to fetch a bucket of water, or "strap down" a beast, as some weary traveller would ride in, splashed and wayworn.

If there seemed no order or discipline anywhere, there was little confusion, and no ill humor whatever. All seemed ready to oblige; and the work of life, so far as I could see from my window, went on cheerfully and joyfully, if not very regularly or well.

If there was none of the trim propriety, or that neatness that rises to elegance, which I had seen in my father's household, there was a lavish profusion here, a boundless abundance, that, contrasted with our mode of life, made us seem almost mean and penurious. Guests came and went unceasingly, and, to all seeming, not known to any one. An unbounded hospitality awaited all comers, and of the party who supped and caroused to-night, none remained on the morrow, nor, perhaps, even a name was remembered.

It took me some days to learn this, and to know that there was nothing singular or strange in the position I occupied, living where none knew why or whence I came, or even so much as cared to inquire my name or country.

In the great hall, where we dined all together, — the distinguished guests at one end of the table, the lesser notabilities lower down, and the menials last of all, — there was ever a place reserved for sudden arrivals; and it was rare that the meal went over without some such. A hearty welcome and a cordial greeting were soon over, and the work of festivity went on as before.

I was soon given to understand that, not only I might dispose of my time how I pleased, but that every appliance to do so agreeably was at my disposal, and that I might ride or drive or shoot or sledge, just as I fancied. And though I was cautious to show that my personal pretensions were of the very humblest, this fact seemed no barrier whatever to my enjoyment of all these courteous civilities.

"We 're always glad when any one will ride the *juckers*," said a Jäger to me; "they are ruined for want of exercise, and if you like three mounts a day, you shall have them."

It was a rare piece of good luck for me that I could both ride and shoot. No two accomplishments could have stood me in such request as these, and I rose immensely in the esteem of those amongst whom I sat at table when they saw that I could sit a back-jumper and shoot a wood-pigeon on the wing.

While I thus won such humble suffrages, there was a higher applause that my heart craved and longed for. As the company — some five-and-twenty or thirty persons — who dined at the upper table withdrew after dinner, they passed into the drawing-rooms, and we saw them no more. Of the music and dancing, in which they passed the evening, we knew nothing; and we in our own way had our revels, which certainly amply contented those who had no pretensions to higher company; but this was precisely what I could not, do what I might, divest myself of. Like one of the characters of my old favorite Balzac, I yearned to be once more in the *salon*, and amongst *ces épaules blanches*, where the whole game of life is finer, where the parries are neater, and the thrusts more deadly.

An accident gave me what all my ingenuity could not have effected. A groom of the chambers came suddenly, one evening, into the hall where we all sat, to ask if any one there could play the new *csardas* called the "Stephan." It was all the rage at Pesth; but no copy of it had yet reached the far East. I had learned this while at Pesth, and had the music with me; and of course, offered my services at once. Scarcely permitted a moment to make some slight change of dress, I found myself in a handsome *salon* with a numerous company. In my first confusion I could mark little beyond the fact that most of the persons were in the national costume, the ladies wearing the laced bodies, covered with precious stones, and the men in velvet coats, with massive turquoise buttons, the whole effect being something like that of a splendid scene in a theatre.

"We are going to avail ourselves of your talent at the piano, sir," said the Countess Hunyadi, approaching me with a courteous smile. "But let me first offer you some tea."

Not knowing if fortune might ever repeat her present favor, I resolved to profit by the opportunity to the utmost; and while cautiously repressing all display, contrived to show that I was master of some three or four languages, and a person of education, generally.

"We are puzzled about your nationality, sir," said the Countess to me. "If not too great a liberty, may I ask your country?"

When I said England, the effect produced was almost magical. A little murmur of something I might even call applause ran through the room; for I had mentioned the land of all Europe dearest to the Hungarian heart, and I heard, "An Englishman! an Englishman!" repeated from mouth to mouth, in accents of kindest meaning.

"Why had I not presented myself before? Why had I not sent my name to the Countess? Why not have made it known that I was here?" and so on, were asked eagerly of me, as though my mere nationality had invested me with some special claim to attention and regard.

I had to own that my visit was a purely business one; that I had come to see and confer with the Count, and had not the very slightest pretension to expect the courtesies I was then receiving.

My performance at the piano crowned my success. I played the *csardas* with such spirit as an impassioned dancer alone can give to the measure he delights in, and two enthusiastic encores rewarded my triumph. "Adolf, you must play now, for I know the Englishman is dying to have a dance," said the gay young Countess Palfi; "and I am quite ready to be his partner." And the next moment we were whirling along in all the mad mazes of the *csardas.*

There is that amount of display in the dancing of the *csardas* that not merely invites criticism, but actually compels an outspoken admiration whenever anything like excellence accompanies the performance. My partner was celebrated for the grace and beauty of her dancing, and for those innumerable interpolations which, fancy or caprice suggesting, she could throw into the measure. To meet and respond to these by appropriate gesture, to catch the spirit of each mood, and be ready for each change, was the task now assigned me; and I need not say with what passionate ardor I threw myself into it. At one moment she would advance in proud defiance; and as I fell back in timid homage, she would turn and fly off in the wild transport of a waltz movement. Then it was mine to pursue and overtake her; and, clasping her, whirl away, till suddenly with a bound she would free herself, again to dramatize some passing emotion, some mood of deep dejection, or of mad and exuberant delight. It was clear that she was bent on trying the resources of my ingenuity to the very last limit; and the loud plaudits that greeted my successes had evidently put her pride on the mettle. I saw this, and saw, as I thought, that the contest had begun to pique; so, taking the next opportunity she gave me to touch her hand, I dropped on one knee, and, kissing her fingers, declared myself vanquished.

A deafening cheer greeted this finale, and accompanied us as I led my partner to her seat.

It is a fortunate thing for young natures that there is no amount of praise, no quantity of flattery, ever palls upon them. Their moral digestion is as great as their physical; and even gluttony does not seem to hurt them. Of all the flattering speeches made me on my performance, none were more cordially uttered than by my beautiful partner, who declared that if I had but the Hungarian costume, — where the clink of the spur and the jingle of the hussar equipment blend with the time, — my *csardas* was perfection.

Over and over again were regrets uttered that the Empress, who had seen the dance at Pesth done by timid and unimpassioned dancers, and who had, in consequence, carried away but a faint idea of its real captivation, could have witnessed our performance; and some even began to plot how such a representation could be prepared for her Majesty's next visit to Hungary. While they thus talked, supper was announced; and as the company were marshalling themselves into the order to move forward, I took the opportunity to slip away unnoticed to my room, well remembering that my presence there was the result of accident, and that nothing but a generous courtesy could regard me as a guest.

I had not been many minutes in my room when I heard a footstep in the corridor. I turned the key in my lock, and put out my light.

"Herr Engländer! Herr Engländer!" cried a servant's voice, as a sharp knocking shook the door. I made no reply, and he retreated.

It was clear to me that an invitation had been sent after me; and this thought filled the measure of my self-gratulation, and I drew nigh my fire, to sit and weave the pleasantest fancies that had crossed my mind for many a long day.

I waited for some time, sitting by the firelight, and then relit my lamp. I had a long letter to write to Mademoiselle Sara; for up to then I had said nothing of my arrival, nor given any account of the Schloss Hunyadi.

Had my task been simply to record my life and my impressions of those around me at Hunyadi, nothing could well have been much easier. My few days there had been actually crammed with those small and pleasant incidents which tell well in gossiping correspondence. It was all, too, so strange, so novel, so picturesque, that, to make an effective tableau of such a life, was merely to draw on memory.

There was a barbaric grandeur, on the whole, in the vast building; its crowds of followers, its hordes of retainers who came and went, apparently at no bidding but their own; in the ceaseless tide of travellers who, hospited for the night, went their way on the morrow, no more impressed by the hospitality, to all seeming, than by a thing they had their own valid right to. Details there were of neglect and savagery, that even an humble household might have been ashamed of, but these were lost — submerged, as it were — in that ocean of boundless extravagance and cost, and speedily lost sight of.

It was now my task to tell Sara all this, colored by the light — a warm light, too — of my own enjoyment of it. I pictured the place as I saw it on the night I came, and told how I could not imagine for a while in what wild region I found myself; I narrated the way in which I was assigned my place in this strange world, with Ober-jägers and Unter-jägers for my friends, who mounted me and often accompanied me in my rides; how I had seen the vast territories from hill-tops and eminences which pertained to the great Count, boundless plains that in summer would have been waving with yellow corn, and far-stretching woods of oak or pine lost in the long distance; and, last of all, coming down to the very moment I was writing, I related the incident by which I had been promoted to the society of the castle, and how I had passed my first evening.

My pen ran rapidly along as I told of the splendors and magnificence of the scene, and of a company whose brilliant costume filled up the measure of the enchantment. "They pass and repass before me, in all their gorgeous bravery, as I write; the air vibrates with the music, and unconsciously my foot keeps time with the measure of that *csardas*, that spins and whirls before me till my brain reels with a mad intoxication."

It was only when I read over what I had written, that I became aware of the questionable taste of recording these things to one who, perhaps, was to read them after a day of heavy toil or a sleepless night of watching. What will she think of me, thought I, if it be thus I seem to discharge the weighty trust confided to me? Was it to mingle in such revelries I came here, or will she deem that these follies are the fitting prelude to a grave and difficult negotiation? For a moment I had half determined to throw my letter in the fire, and limit myself simply to saying that I had arrived, and was awaiting the Count's return! but my pride, or rather my vanity, carried the day; I could not repress the delight I felt to be in a society I clung to by so many interesting ties, and to show that here I was in my true element, — here breathing the air that was native to me.

"I am not to be supposed to forget," I wrote, "that it was not for these pleasures you sent me here, for I bear well in mind why I have come, and what I have to do. Count Hunyadi is, however, absent, and will not return before the end of the week, by which time I fully hope that I shall have assured such a position here as will mainly contribute to my ability to serve you. I pray you, therefore, to read this letter by the light of the assurance I now give, and though I may seem to lend myself too easily to pleasure, to believe that no seductions of amusement, no flatteries of my self-love, shall turn me from the devotion I owe you, and from the fidelity to which I pledge my life." With this I closed my letter and addressed it.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SALON.

THE morning after my *csardas* success, a valet in discreet black brought me a message from the Countess that she expected to see me at her table at dinner, and from him I learned the names and rank of the persons I had met the night before. They were all of that high noblesse which in Hungary assumes a sort of family prestige, and by frequent intermarriage really possesses many of the close familiar interests of the family. Austrians, or indeed Germans from any part, are rarely received in these intimate gatherings, and I learned with some surprise that the only strangers were an English "lord" and his countess — so the man styled them — who were then amongst the guests. "The Lord" was with the Count on the shooting excursion; my Lady being confined to her room by a heavy cold she had caught out sledging.

Shall I be misunderstood if I own that I was very sorry to hear that an Englishman and a man of title was amongst the company? Whatever favor foreigners might extend to any small accomplishments I could lay claim to, I well knew would not compensate in my countryman's eyes for my want of station. In my father's house I had often had occasion to remark that while Englishmen freely admitted the advances of a foreigner, and accepted his acquaintance with a courteous readiness, with each other they maintained a cold and studied reserve; as though no difference of place or circumstance was to obliterate that insular code which defines class, and limits each man to the exact rank he belongs to.

When they shall see, therefore, thought I, how my titled countryman will treat me, — the distance at which he will hold me, and the measured firmness with which he will repel, not my familiarities, for I should not dare them, but simply the ease of my manner, — these foreigners will be driven to regard me as some ignoble upstart who has no pretension whatever to be amongst them. I was very unwilling to encounter this humiliation. It was true I was not sailing under false colors. I had assumed no pretensions from which I was now to retreat. I had nothing to disown or disavow; but still I was about to be the willing guest of a society, to a place in which in my own country I could not have the faintest pretension; and it was just possible that my countryman might bring this fact before me.

He might do worse, — he might question me as to who and what I was; nor was I very sure how my tact or my temper might carry me through such an ordeal.

Would it not be wiser and better for me to avoid this peril? Should I not spare myself much mortification and much needless pain? Thus thinking, I resolved to wait on the Countess at once, and explain frankly why I felt obliged to decline the gracious courtesy she had extended to me, and refuse an honor so full of pleasure and of pride.

She was not alone as I entered, — the Countess Palfi was with her, — and I scarcely knew how to approach my theme in presence of a third person. With a bold effort, however, I told what I had come for; not very collectedly, indeed, nor perhaps very intelligibly, but in such a way as to convey that I had not courage to face what might look at least like a false position, and was almost sure to entail all the unpleasant relations of such. "In fact, Madam," said I, "I am nobody; and in my country men of rank never associate with nobodies, even by an accident. My Lord would not forgive you for throwing him into such acquaintanceship, and I should never forgive myself for having caused you the unpleasantness. I don't imagine I have made my meaning very clear."

"You have certainly made me very uncomfortable," broke in Countess Hunyadi, thoughtfully. "I thought that we Hungarians had rather strict notions on these subjects, but these of your country leave them miles behind."

"And are less reasonable, besides," said the Palfi, "since your nobility is being continually recruited from so rich a bourgeoisie."

"At all events," cried the Countess, suddenly, "we are here at Schloss Hunyadi, and I am its mistress. I invite you to dine with me; it remains for you to decide how you treat my invitation."

"Put in that way, Madam, I accept with deference;" and I bowed deeply and moved towards the door. The ladies acknowledged my salute in silence, and I fancied with coldness, and I retired.

I was evidently mistaken in attributing coldness to their manner; the ladies received me when I appeared at dinner with a marked cordiality. I sat next Madame Palfi, who talked to me like an old friend, told me who the various people at table were, and gave me great pleasure by saying that I was sure to become a favorite with Count Hunyadi, who delighted in gayety, and cherished all those that promoted it. Seeing what interest I took in the ways of Hungarian life, she explained many of the customs I saw around me, which, deriving from a great antiquity, were doubtless soon destined to give way before the advance of a higher civilization. I asked what she knew of the English guests. It was nothing, or next to nothing, — Count Hunyadi had made their acquaintance at Baden that summer, and invited them to pass their Christmas with him. Countess Palfi had herself arrived since they came, and had not seen them; for "my Lord," as he was generally called, had left at once to join the shooting-party, and my Lady had not appeared since the day after her arrival. "I only know that she is a great beauty, and of most charming manners. The men all rave of her, so that we are half jealous already. We were expecting to see her at dinner to-day, but we hear that she is less well than yesterday."

"Do you know their name?"

"No; I believe I heard it, — but I am not familiar with English names, and it has escaped me; but I will present you by and by to Count George Szechenyi, who was at Baden when the Hunyadi met them, — he 'll tell you more of them."

I assured her that my curiosity was most amply satisfied already. It was a class in which I could not expect to find an acquaintance, far less a friend.

"There is something almost forced in this humility of yours," cried she. "Are we to find out some fine morning that you are a prince in disguise?" She laughed so merrily at her own conceit that Madame Hunyadi asked the cause of her mirth.

"I will tell you later on," said she. We soon afterwards rose to go into the drawing-room, and I saw as they laughed together that she had told her what she said.

"Do you know," said the Countess Hunyadi, approaching me, "I am half of Madame Palfi's mind, and I shall never rest till you reveal your secret to us?"

I said something laughingly about my *incognito* being the best coat in my wardrobe, and the matter dropped. That night I sang several times, alone, and in duet with the Palfi, and was overwhelmed with flatteries of my "fresh tenor voice" and my "admirable method." It was something so new and strange to me to find myself the centre of polite attentions, and of those warm praises which consummate good breeding knows how to bestow without outraging taste, that I found it hard to repress the wild delight that possessed me.

If I had piqued their curiosity to find out who or what I was, I had also stimulated my own ambition to astonish them.

"He says he will ride out with me to-morrow, and does n't care if I give him a lively mount," said one, speaking of me.

"And you mean to gratify him, George?" asked another.

"He shall have the roan that hoisted you out of the saddle with his hind quarters."

"Come, come, gentlemen, I'll not have my *protégé* injured to gratify your jealousies," said Madame Hunyadi; "he shall be my escort."

"If he rides as he plays billiards, you need not be much alarmed about him. The fellow can do what he likes at the cannon game."

"I'd give fifty Naps to know his history," cried another.

I was playing chess as he said this, and, turning my head quietly around, I said, "The secret is not worth half the money, sir; and if it really interests you, you shall have it for the asking."

He muttered out a mass of apologies and confused excuses, to all the embarrassment of which I left him most pitilessly, and the incident ended. I saw, however, enough to perceive that if I had won the suffrages of the ladies, the men of the party had conceived an undisguised dislike of me, and openly resented the favor shown me.

"What can you do with the foils, young gentleman?" whispered Szechenyi to me, as he came near.

"Pretty much as I did with you at billiards awhile ago," said I, insolently; for my blood was up, and I burned to fix a quarrel somewhere.

"Shall we try?" asked he, dryly.

"If you say without the buttons, I agree."

"Of course, I mean that."

I nodded, and he went on, —

"Come down to the riding-school by the first light tomorrow then, and I 'll have all in readiness."

I gave another nod of assent, and moved away. I had enough on my hands now; for, besides other engagements, I had promised the Countess Palfi to arrange a little piece for private theatricals, and have it ready by the time of Count Hunyadi's return. So far from feeling oppressed or overwhelmed by the multiplicity of these cares, they stimulated me to a degree of excitement almost maddening. Failure somewhere seemed inevitable, and, for the life of me, I could not choose where it should be. As my spirits rose, I threw off all the reserve I had worn before, and talked away with an animation and boldness I felt uncontrollable. I made *calembourgs*, and dashed off impromptu verses at the piano; and when, culminating in some impertinence by a witty picture of the persons around me I had convulsed the whole room with laughter, I sprang up, and, saying good-night, disappeared.

The roars of their laughter followed me down the corridor, nor did they cease to ring in my ears till I had closed my door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNLOOKED-FOR MEETING.

I COULD more easily record my sensations in the paroxysm of a fever than recall how I passed that night. I am aware that I wrote a long letter to my mother, and a longer to Sara, both to be despatched in case ill befell me in my encounter. What I said to either, or how I said it, I know not.

No more can I explain why I put all my papers together in such fashion that they could be thrown into the fire at once, without leaving any, the slightest, clew to trace me by. That secret, which I had affected to hold so cheaply, did in reality possess some strange fascination for me, and I desired to be a puzzle and an enigma even after I was gone.

It wanted one short hour of dawn when I had finished; but I was still too much excited to sleep. I knew how unfavorably I should come to the encounter before me with jarred nerves and the weariness of a night's watching; but it was too late now to help that; too late, besides, to speculate on what men would say of such a causeless duel, brought on, as I could not conceal from myself, by my hot temper. By the time I had taken my cold bath my nerves became more braced, and I scarcely felt a trace of fatigue or exhaustion. The gray morning was just breaking as I stole quietly downstairs and issued forth into the courtyard. A heavy fall of snow had occurred in the night, and an unbroken expanse of billowy whiteness spread out before me, save where, from a corner of the court, some foot-tracks led towards the riding-school. I saw, therefore, that I was not the first at the tryst, and I hastened on in all speed.

Six or eight young men, closely muffled in furs, stood at the door as I came up, and gravely uncovered to me. They made way for me to pass in without speaking; and while, stamping the snow from my boots, I said something about the cold of the morning, they muttered what might mean assent or the reverse in a low half-sulky tone, that certainly little invited to further remark.

For a few seconds they talked together in whispers, and then a tall ill-favored fellow, with a deep scar from the cheek-bone to the upper lip, came abruptly up to me.

"Look here, young fellow," said he. "I am to act as your second; and though, of course, I'd like to know that the man I handled was a gentleman, I do not ask you to tell anything about yourself that you prefer to keep back. I would only say that, if ugly consequences come of this stupid business, the blame must fall upon you. Your temper provoked it, is that not true?"

I nodded assent, and he went on.

"So far, all right. The next point is this. We are all on honor that, whatever happens, not a word or a syllable shall ever escape us. Do you agree to this?"

"I agree," said I, calmly.

"Give me your hand on it."

I gave him my hand; and as he held it in his own, he said, "On the faith of a gentleman, I will never reveal to my last day what shall pass here this morning."

I repeated the words after him, and we moved on into the school.

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I had drawn my sofa in front of the fire, and, stretching myself on it, fell into a deep dreamless sleep. A night's wakefulness, and the excitement I had gone through, had so far worked upon me that I did not hear the opening of my door, nor the tread of a heavy man as he came forward and seated himself by the fire. It was only the cold touch of his fingers on the wrist as he felt my pulse that at last aroused me.

"Don't start, don't flurry yourself," said he, calmly, to me. "I am the doctor. I have been to see the other, and I promised to look in on you,"

"How is he? Is it serious?"

"It will be a slow affair. It was an ugly thrust, — all the dorsal muscles pierced, but no internal mischief done."

"He will certainly recover then?"

"There is no reason why he should not. But where is this scratch of yours? Let me see it."

"It is a nothing, doctor, — a mere nothing. Pray take no trouble about it."

"But I must. I have pledged myself to examine your wound; and I must keep my word."

"Surely these gentlemen are scarcely so very anxious about me," said I, in some pique. "Not one of them vouchsafed to see me safe home, though I had lost some blood, and felt very faint."

"I did not say it was these gentlemen sent me here," said he, dryly.

"Then who else knew anything about this business?"

"If you must know, then," said he, "it is the English Countess who is staying here, and whom I have been attending for the last week. How she came to hear of this affair I cannot tell you, for I know it is a secret to the rest of the house; but she made me promise to come and see you, and if there was nothing in your wound to forbid it, to bring you over to her dressing-room, and present you to her. And now let me look at the injury."

I took off my coat, and, baring my arm, displayed a very ugly thrust, which, entering above the wrist, came out between the two bones of the arm.

"Now I call this the worst of the two," said he, examining it. "Does it give you much pain?"

"Some uneasiness; nothing more. When may I see the Countess?" asked I; for an intense curiosity to meet her had now possessed me.

"If you like, you may go at once; not that I can accompany you, for I am off for a distant visit; but her rooms are at the end of this corridor, and you enter by the conservatory. Meanwhile I must bandage this arm in somewhat better fashion than you have done."

While he was engaged in dressing my wound, he rambled on about the reckless habits that made such *rencontres* possible. "We are in the middle of the seventeenth century here, with all its barbarisms," said he. "These young fellows were vexed at seeing the notice you attracted; and that was to their thinking cause enough to send you off with a damaged lung or a maimed limb. It's all well, however, as long as Graf Hunyadi does not hear of it. But if he should, he'll turn them out, every man of them, for this treatment of an Englishman."

"Then we must take care, sir, that he does not hear of it," said I, half fiercely, and as though addressing my speech especially to himself.

"Not from me, certainly," said he. "My doctor's instincts always save me from such indiscretions."

"Is our Countess young, doctor?" asked I, half jocularly.

"Young and pretty, though one might say, too, she has been younger and prettier. If you dine below stairs today, drink no wine, and get back to your sofa as soon as you can after dinner." With this caution he left me.

A heavy packet of letters had arrived from Fiume, containing, I surmised, some instructions for which I had written; but seeing that the address was in the cashier's handwriting, I felt no impatience to break the seal.

I dressed myself with unusual care, though the pain of my arm made the process a very slow one; and at last set out to pay my visit. I passed along the corridor, through the conservatory, and found myself at a door, at which I knocked twice. At last I turned the handle, and entered a small but handsomely furnished drawing-room, about which books and newspapers lay scattered; and a small embroidery-frame near the fire showed where she, who was engaged with that task, had lately been seated. As I bent down in some curiosity to examine a really clever copy of an altar-piece of Albert Dürer, a door gently opened, and I heard the rustle of a silk dress. I had not got time to look round when, with a cry, she rushed towards me, and clasped me in her arms. It was Madame Cleremont!

"My own dear, dear Digby!" she cried, as she kissed me over face and forehead, smoothing back my hair to look at me, and then falling again on my neck. "I knew it could be no other when I heard of you, darling; and when they told me of your singing, I could have sworn it was yourself."

I tried to disengage myself from her embrace, and summoned what I could of sternness to repel her caresses. She dropped at my feet, and, clasping my hands, implored me, in accents broken with passion, to forgive her. To see her who had once been all that a mother could have been to me in tenderness and care, who watched the long hours of the night beside my sick-bed, — to see her there before me, abject, self-accused, and yet entreating forgiveness, was more than I could bear. My nerves, besides, had been already too tensely strung; and I burst into a passion of tears that totally overcame me. She sat with her arm round me, and wept.

With a wild hysterical rapidity she poured forth a sort of excuse of her own conduct. She recalled all that I had seen her suffer of insult and shame; the daily outrages passed upon her; the slights which no woman can or ought to pardon. She spoke of her friendlessness, her misery; but, more than all, her consuming desire to be avenged on the man who had degraded her. "Your father, I knew, was the man to do me this justice," she cried; "he did not love me, nor did I love him; but we both hated this wretch, and it seemed little to me what became of me, if I could but compass his ruin."

I scarcely followed her. I bethought me of my poor mother, for whom none had a thought, neither of the wrongs done her, nor of the sufferings to which she was so remorselessly consigned.

"You do not listen to me. You do not hear me," cried she, passionately; "and yet who has been your friend as I have? Who has implored your father to be just towards you as I have done? Who has hazarded her whole future in maintaining your rights, — who but I?" In a wild rhapsody of mingled passion and appeal she went on to show how Sir Roger insisted on presenting her everywhere as his wife.

Even at courts she had been so presented, though all the terrible consequences of exposure were sure to ring over the whole of Europe. The personal danger of the step was a temptation too strong to resist; and the altercation and vindication that must follow were ecstasy to him. He was pitting himself against the world, and he would back himself on the issue.

"And, here, where we are now," cried I, "what is to happen if to-morrow some stranger should arrive from England who knows your story, and feels he owes it to his host to proclaim it?"

"Is it not too clear what is to happen?" shrieked she; "blood, more blood, — theirs or his, or both! Just as he struck a young prince at Baden with a glove across the face, because he stared at me too rudely, and shot him afterwards; his dearest tie to me is the peril that attaches to me. Do you not know him, Digby? Do you not know the insolent disdain with which he refuses to be bound by what other men submit to; and that when he has said, 'I am ready to stake my life on it,' he believes he has proved his conviction to be a just one?"

Of my father's means, or what remained to him of fortune, she knew nothing. They had often been reduced to almost want, and at other times money would flow freely in, to be wasted and lavished with that careless munificence that no experiences of privation could ever teach prudence. We now turned to speculate on what would happen when he came back from this shooting-party; how he would recognize me.

"I see," cried I: "you suspect he will disown me?"

"Not that, dear Digby," said she, in some confusion, "but he may require — that is, he may wish you to conform to some plan, some procedure of his own."

"If this should involve the smallest infraction of what is due to my mother, I 'll refuse," said I, firmly, "and reject as openly as he dares to make it."

"And are you ready to face what may follow?"

"If you mean as regards myself, I am quite ready. My father threw me off years ago, and I am better able to fight the battle of life now than I was then. I ask nothing of him, — not even his name. If you speak of other consequences, — of what may ensue when his hosts shall learn the fraud he has practised on them — " It was only as the fatal word fell from me that I felt how cruelly I had spoken, and I stopped and took her hand in mine, saying, " Do not be angry with me, dear friend, that I have spoken a bitter word; bear with me for *her* sake, who has none to befriend her but myself."

She made me no answer, but looked out cold and stern into vacancy, her pale features motionless, not a line or lineament betraying what was passing within her.

" Why remain here then to provoke a catastrophe?" cried she, suddenly. " If you have come for pleasure, you see enough to be aware there is little more awaiting you."

" I have not come for pleasure. I am here to confer with Count Hunyadi on a matter of business."

" And will some paltry success in a little peddling contract for the Count's wine or his olives or his Indian corn compensate you for the ruin you may bring on your father? Will it recompense you if his blood be shed?"

There was a tone of defiant sarcasm in the way she spoke these words that showed me, if I would not yield to her persuasions, she would not hesitate to employ other means of coercion. Perhaps she mistook the astonishment my face expressed for terror; for she went on: " It would be well that you thought twice over it ere you make your breach with your father irreparable. Remember, it is not a question of a passing sentimentality or a sympathy, it is the whole story of your life is at issue, — if you be anything, or anybody, or a nameless creature, without belongings or kindred."

I sat for some minutes in deep thought. I was not sure whether I understood her words, and that she meant to say it lay entirely with my father to own or disown me, as he pleased. She seemed delighted at my embarrassment, and her voice rung out with its own clear triumphant cadence, as she said, " You begin at last to see how near the precipice you have been straying."

" One moment, Madam," cried I. " If my mother be Lady Norcott, Sir Roger cannot disown me; not to say that already, in an open court, he has maintained his right over me and declared me his son."

"You are opening a question I will not touch, Digby," said she, gravely, — "your mother's marriage. I will only say that the ablest lawyers your father has consulted pronounce it more than questionable."

"And my father has then entertained the project of an attempt to break it."

"This is not fair," cried she, eagerly; "you lead me on from one admission to another, till I find myself revealing confidences to one who at any moment may avow himself my enemy."

I raised my eyes to her face, and she met my glance with a look cold, stern, and impassive, as though she would say, "Choose your path now, and accept me as friend or foe." All the winning softness of her manner, all those engaging coquetries of look and gesture, of which none was more mistress, were gone, and another and a very different nature had replaced them.

This, then, was one of those women all tenderness and softness and fascination, but who behind this mask have the fierce nature of the tigress. Could she be the same I had seen so submissive under all the insolence of her brutal husband, bearing his scoffs and his sarcasms without a word of reply? Was it that these cruelties had at last evoked this stern spirit, and that another temperament had been generated out of a nature broken down and demoralized by ill treatment?

"Shall I tell you what I think you ought to do?" asked she, calmly. I nodded assent. "Sit down there, then," continued she, "and write these few lines to your father, and let him have them before he returns here."

"First of all, I cannot write just now; I have had a slight accident to my right arm."

"I know," said she, smiling dubiously. "You hurt it in the riding-school; but it 's a mere nothing, is it not?"

I made a gesture of assent, not altogether pleased the while at the little sympathy she vouchsafed me, and the insignificance she ascribed to my wound.

"Shall I write for you, then? you can sign it afterwards."

"Let me first know what you would have me say."

"Dear father— You always addressed him that way?"

"Yes."

"Dear father, —I have been here some days, awaiting Count Hunyadi's return to transact some matters of business with him, and have by a mere accident learned that you are amongst his guests. As I do not know how, to what extent, or in what capacity it may be your pleasure to recognize me, or whether it might not chime better with your convenience to ignore me altogether, I write now to submit myself entirely to your will and guidance, being in this, as in all things, your dutiful and obedient son."

The words came from her pen as rapidly as her fingers could move across the paper; and as she finished, she pushed it towards me, saying, —

"There—put 'Digby Norcott' there, and it is all done!"

"This is a matter to think over," said I, gravely. "I may be compromising other interests than my own by signing this."

"Those Jews of yours have imbued you well with their cautious spirit, I see," said she, scoffingly.

"They have taught me no lessons I am ashamed of, Madam," said I, reddening with anger.

"I declare I don't know you as the Digby of long ago! I fancied I did, when I heard those ladies coming upstairs each night, so charmed with all your graceful gifts, and so eloquent over all your fascinations; and now, as you stand there, word-splitting and phrase-weighing, canvassing what it might cost you to do this or where it would lead you to say that, I ask myself, Is this the boy of whom his father said, 'Above all things he shall be a gentleman'?"

"To one element of that character, Madam, I will try and preserve my claim, —no provocation shall drive me to utter a rudeness to a lady."

"This is less breeding than calculation, young gentleman. I read such natures as yours as easily as a printed book."

"I ask nothing better, Madam; my only fear would be that you should mistake me, and imagine that any deference to my father's views would make me forget my mother's rights."

"So then," cried she, with a mocking laugh, "you have got your courage up so far, — you dare me! Be advised, however, and do not court such an unequal contest. I have but to choose in which of a score of ways I could crush you, — do you mark me? crush you! You will not always be as lucky as you were this morning in the riding-school."

"Great heaven!" cried I, "was this, then, of *your* devising?"

"You begin to have a glimpse of whom you have to deal with? Go back to your room and reflect on that knowledge, and if it end in persuading you to quit this place at once, and never return to it, it will be a wise resolve."

I was too much occupied with the terrible fact that she had already conspired against my life to heed her words of counsel, and I stood there stunned and confused.

In the look of scorn and hate she threw on me, she seemed to exult over my forlorn and bewildered condition.

"I scarcely think there is any need to prolong this interview," said she, at last, with an easy smile; "each of us is by this time aware of the kindly sentiments of the other; is it not so?"

"I am going, Madam," I stammered out; "good-bye."

She made a slight movement, as I thought, towards me; but it was in reality the prelude to a deep courtesy, while in her sweetest of accents she whispered, "*Au revoir*, Monsieur Digby, *au revoir*." I bowed deeply and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXX.

HASTY TIDINGS.

Of all the revulsions of feeling that can befall the heart, I know of none to compare in poignant agony with the sudden consciousness that you are hated where once you were loved; that where once you had turned for consolation or sympathy you have now nothing to expect but coldness and distrust; that the treasure of affection on which you have counted against the day of adversity had proved bankrupt, and nothing remained of all its bright hopes and promises but bitter regrets and sorrowful repinings.

It was in the very last depth of this spirit I now locked myself in my room to determine what I should do, by what course I should shape my future. I saw the stake for which Madame Cleremont was playing. She had resolved that my mother's marriage should be broken, and she herself declared Lady Norcott. That my father might be brought to accede to such a plan was by no means improbable. Its extravagance and its enormity would have been great inducements, had he no other interest in the matter.

I began to canvass with myself how persons poor and friendless could possibly meet the legal battle which this question should originate, and how my mother, in her destitution and poverty, could contend against the force of the wealth that would be opposed to her. It had only been by the united efforts of her relatives and friends, all eager to support her in such a cause, that she had been enabled to face the expenses of the suit my father had brought on the question of my guardianship. How could she again sustain a like charge? Was it likely that her present condition would enable her to fee leaders on circuit and bar magnates, to pay the costs of witnesses, and all the endless outgoings of the law?

So long as I lived, I well knew my poor mother would compromise none of the rights that pertained to me; but if I could be got rid of, — and the event of the morning shot through my mind, — some arrangement with her might not be impossible, — at least, it was open to them to think so; and I could well imagine that they would build on such a foundation. It was not easy to imagine a woman like Madame Cleremont, a person of the most attractive manners, beautiful, gifted, and graceful, capable of a great crime; but she herself had shown me more than once in fiction the portraiture of an individual who, while shrinking with horror from the coarse contact of guilt, would willingly set the springs in motion which ultimately conduce to the most appalling disasters. I remember even her saying to me one day, "It is in watching the terrible explosions their schemes have ignited, that cowards learn to taste what they fancy to be the ecstasy of courage."

While I thought what a sorry adversary I should prove against such a woman, with all the wiles of her nature, and all the seductions by which she could display them, my eyes fell upon the packet from Fiume, which still lay with its seal unbroken. I broke it open half carelessly. It contained an envelope marked "Letters," and the following note: —

"HERR OWEN, — With this you are informed that the house of Hodnig and Oppovich has failed, dockets of bankruptcy having been yesterday declared against that firm; the usual assignees will be duly appointed by the court to liquidate, on such terms as the estate permits. Present liabilities are currently stated as below eight millions of florins. Actual property will not meet half that sum.

"Further negotiations regarding the Hunyadi contract on your part are consequently unnecessary, seeing that the most favorable conditions you could obtain would in no wise avert or even lessen the blow that has fallen on the house.

"I am directed to enclose you by bill the sum of two hundred and eighteen florins twenty-seven kreutzers, which at the current exchange will pay your salary to the end of the present quarter, and also to state that, having duly acknowledged the receipt of this sum to me by letter, you are to consider yourself free of all engagement to the house. I am also instructed to say that your zeal and probity will be duly attested when any reference is addressed to the managers of this estate.

"I am, with accustomed esteem and respect,
"Your devoted servant,
"JACOB ULRICH.

"P. S. Herr Ignaz is, happily for him, in a condition that renders him unconscious of his calamity. The family has retired for the present to the small cottage near the gate of the Abazzia Villa, called 'Die Hutte,' but desires complete privacy, and declines all condolences. — J. U.

"*2nd* P. S. The enclosed letters have arrived here during your absence."

So intensely imbued was my mind with suspicion and distrust, that it was not till after long and careful examination I satisfied myself that this letter was genuine, and that its contents might be taken as true. The packet it enclosed would, however, have resolved all doubt; they were three letters from my dear mother. Frequent reference was made to other letters which had never reached me, and in which it was clear the mode in which she had learned my address was explained. She also spoke of Sara as of one she knew by correspondence, and gave me to understand how she was following every little humble incident of my daily life with loving interest and affection. She enjoined me by all means to devote myself heartily and wholly to those who had befriended me so generously, and to merit the esteem of that good girl, who, caring nothing for herself, gave her heart and soul to the service of her father.

"I have told you so much," said she, "of myself in former letters" (these I never saw) "that I shall not weary you with more. You know why I gave up the school, and through what reasonings I consented to call myself Lady Norcott, though in such poverty as mine the assumption of a title only provoked ridicule. Mr. McBride, however, persuaded me that a voluntary surrender of my position might be made terrible use of against me, should — what I cannot believe — the attempt ever be made to question the legality of my marriage with your father.

"It has been so constantly repeated, however, that Sir

Roger means to marry this lady, — some say they are already married, — that I have had careful abstracts made of the registry, and every detail duly certified which can establish your legitimacy, — not that I can bring myself to believe your father would ever raise that question. Strangely enough, my allowance, left unpaid for several years, was lately resumed, and Foster and Wall received orders to acknowledge my drafts on them, for what, I concluded, were meant to cover all the arrears due. As I had already tided over these years of trial and pressure, I refused all save the sum due for the current year, and begged to learn Sir Roger's address that I might write to him. To this they replied 'that they had no information to give me on the subject; that their instructions, as regarded payments to me, came to them from the house of Rödiger, in Frankfort, and in the manner and terms already communicated to me,' — all showing me that the whole was a matter of business, into which no sentiment was to enter, or be deemed capable of entering."

It was about this period my mother came to learn my address, and she avowed that all other thoughts and cares were speedily lost in the whirlpool of joy these tidings swept around her. Her eagerness to see me grew intense, but was tempered by the fear lest her selfish anxiety might prejudice me in that esteem I had already won from my employers, of whom, strangely enough, she spoke freely and familiarly, as though she had known them.

The whole tone of these letters — and I read them over and over — calmed and reassured me. Full of personal details, they were never selfish in its unpleasant sense. They often spoke of poverty, but rather as a thing to be baffled by good-humored contrivance or rendered endurable by habit than as matter for complaint and bewailment. Little dashes of light-heartedness would now and then break the dark sombreness of the picture, and show how her spirit was yet alive to life and its enjoyments. Above all, there was no croaking, no foreboding. She had lived through some years of trial and sorrow, and if the future had others as gloomy in store, it was time enough when they came to meet their exigencies.

What a blessing was it to me to get these at such a time! I no longer felt myself alone and isolated in the world. There was, I now knew, a bank of affection at my disposal at which I could draw at will; and what an object for my imitation was that fine courage of hers, that took defeats as mere passing shadows, and was satisfied to fight on to the end, ever hopeful and ever brave.

How I would have liked to return to Madame Cleremont, and read her some passages of these letters, and said, "And this is the woman you seek to dethrone, and whose place you would fill! This is she whose rival you aspire to be. What think you of the contest now? Which of you should prove the winner? Is it with a nature like this you would like to measure yourself?"

How I would have liked to have dared her to such a combat, and boldly declared that I would make my father himself the umpire as to the worthier. As to her hate or her vengeance, she had as much as promised me both, but I defied them; and I believed I even consulted my safety by open defiance. As I thus stimulated myself with passionate counsels, and burned with eagerness for the moment I might avow them, I flung open my window for fresh air, for my excitement had risen to actual fever.

It was very dark without. Night had set in about two hours, but no stars had yet shone out, and a thick impenetrable blackness pervaded everywhere. Some peasants were shovelling the snow in the court beneath, making a track from the gate to the house-door, and here and there a dimly burning lantern attached to a pole would show where the work was being carried out. As it was about the time of the evening when travellers were wont to arrive, the labor was pressed briskly forward, and I could hear an overseer's voice urging the men to increased zeal and activity.

"There has been a snow-mountain fallen at Miklos, they say," cried one, "and none can pass the road for many a day."

"If they cannot come from Pesth, they can come from Hermanstadt, from Temesvar, from Klausenberg. Guests can come from any quarter," cried the overseer.

I listened with amusement to the discussion that followed;

the various sentiments they uttered as to whether this system of open hospitality raised the character of a country, or was not a heavy mulct out of the rights which the local poor possessed on the properties of their rich neighbors.

"Every flask of Tokayer drunk at the upper table," cried one, "is an eimer of Mediasch lost to the poor man."

"That is the true way to look at it," cried another. "We want neither Counts nor Tokayer."

"That was a Saxon dog barked there!" called out the overseer. "No Hungarian ever reviled what his land is most famed for."

"Here come travellers now," shouted one from the gate. "I hear horses at full speed on the Klausenberg road."

"Lanterns to the gate, and stand free of the road," cried the overseer; and now the scene became one of striking excitement, as the lights flitted rapidly from place to place; the great arch of the gate being accurately marked in outline, and the deep cleft in the snow lined on either side by lanterns suspended between posts.

"They 're coming at a furious pace," cried one; "they 've passed the toll-bridge at full gallop."

"Then it 's the Count himself," chimed in another. "There 's none but he could force the toll-bar."

"It 's a country wagon, with four *juckers*; and here it comes;" and as he spoke four sweating horses swung through the gateway, and came full speed into the court.

"Where is Kitzlach? Call Kitzlach! call the doctor!" screamed a voice from the wagon. "Tell him to come down at once."

"Out with the *juckers*, and harness a fresh team," cried the same voice. And now, as he descended from the wagon, he was surrounded with eager figures, all anxious to hear his tidings. As I could gather nothing from where I was, I hastily threw on a fur coat, and made my way down to the court. I soon learned the news. A terrible disaster had befallen the hunting-party. A she-boar, driven frantic by her wounds, had dashed suddenly into the midst of them, slightly wounded the Count and his head Jäger, but dangerously one of the guests, who had sustained a single combat with her and killed her; not, however, without grievous injury to himself, for a large blood-vessel had been severed; all the efforts to stanch which had been but half successful.

"Have you your tourniquet, doctor?" cried the youth from a wagon, as the equipage was turned again to the gate.

"Everything — everything."

"You 'll want any quantity of lint and bandages; and, remember, nothing can be had down yonder."

"Make your mind easy! I 've forgotten nothing. Just keep your beasts quiet till I get up."

I drew nigh as he was about to mount, and whispered a word in his ear.

"I don't know," said he, gruffly. "I can't see why you should ask."

"Why don't you get up?" cried the youth, impatiently.

"There 's a young fellow here importuning me to ask you for a place in the wagon. He thinks he knows this stranger."

"Let him get in at once, then; and let 's have no more delays." And scarcely had we scrambled to our places, than the loud whip resounded with the quick, sharp report of pistol-shots, and the beasts sprung out at once, rushed through the narrow gateway, and were soon stretching along at their topmost pace through impenetrable blackness.

Crouching in the straw at the bottom of the wagon, I crept as closely as I could to where the doctor was seated beside the young man who drove. I was eager to hear what I could of the incident that had befallen; but, to my great disappointment, they spoke in Hungarian, and all I could gather, from certain dropping expressions, was that both the Count and his English friend had been engaged in some rivalry of personal daring, and that the calamity had come of this insane contest. "They 'll never say 'Mad as a Hunyadi' any longer up at Lees. They 'll say 'Mad as an Englishman.'"

The young fellow spoke in wondrous admiration of the wounded man's courage and coolness, and described how he had taught them to pass a light ligature round his thigh, and tighten it further by inserting a stick to act as a screw. "Up to that," said he, "he had been bleeding like a tapped

Wein-fass; and then he made them give him large goblets of strong Bordeaux, to sustain him."

"He 's a bold-hearted fellow then?" said the doctor.

"The Count declares he has never met his equal. They were alone together when I started, for the Englishman said he had something for the Count's own ear, and begged the others to withdraw."

"So he thought himself in danger?"

"That he did. I saw him myself take off a large signet ring and lay it on the table beside his watch, and he pointed them out to Hunyadi as he came in, and said something in English; but the Count rejoined quickly, 'No, no. It 's not come to that yet.'"

While they spoke slowly, I was able to gather at least the meaning of what passed between them, but I lost all clew so soon as they talked eagerly and rapidly, so that, confused by the unmeaning sounds, and made drowsy by the fresh night-air, I at last fell off into a heavy sleep.

I was awakened by the noise of the wheels over a paved street. I looked up, and saw, by the struggling light of a breaking dawn, that we were in a village where a number of people were awaiting us. "Have you brought the doctor?" "Where is the doctor?" cried several together; and he was scarcely permitted to descend, so eager were they to seize and carry him off.

A dense crowd was gathered before the door of a small two-storied house, into which the doctor now disappeared; and I, mixing with the mass, tried as best I might, to ask how the wounded man was doing, and what hopes there were of his life. While I thus went from one to another vainly endeavoring to make my question intelligible, I heard a loud voice cry out in German, "Where is the young fellow who says he knows him?"

"Here," cried I, boldly. "I believe I know him, — I am almost sure I do."

"Come to the door, then, and look in; do not utter a word," cried a tall dark man I soon knew to be Count Hunyadi. "Mind, sir, for your life's sake, that you don't disturb him."

I crept on tiptoe to the slightly opened door, and looked in. There, on a mattress on the floor, a tall man was lying, while the doctor knelt beside him, and seemed to press with all his weight on his thigh. The sick man slowly turned his face to the light, and it was my father! My knees trembled, my sight grew dim; strength suddenly forsook me, and I fell powerless and senseless to the ground.

They were bathing my face and temples with vinegar and water to rally me when the doctor came to say the sick man desired to see me. In a moment the blood rushed to my head, and I cried out, "I am ready."

"Be calm, sir. A mere word, a gesture, may prove fatal to him," whispered the doctor to me. "His life hangs on a thread."

Count Hunyadi was kneeling beside my father, and evidently trying to catch some faint words he was saying, as I stole forward and knelt down by the bedside. My father turned his eyes slowly round till they fell upon me, — when their expression suddenly changed from the look of weary apathy to a stare of full and steadfast meaning, — intense, indeed, in significance; but I dare not say that this conveyed anything like love or affection for me.

"Come closer," cried he, in a hoarse whisper. "It is Digby, is it not? This boy is my son, Hunyadi," he said, with an increased effort. "Give me your hand." He took my trembling fingers in his cold moist hand, and passed the large signet ring over my second finger. "He is my heir. Gentlemen," he cried, in a tone at once haughty and broken by debility, "my name, my title, my fortune all pass to *him*. By to-morrow you will call him Sir Digby — "

He could not finish; his lips moved without a sound. I was conscious of no more than being drawn heavily across the floor, not utterly bereft of reason, but dulled and stunned as if from the effect of a heavy blow.

When I was able, I crept back to the room. It was now the decline of day. A large white cavalry cloak covered the body. I knelt down beside it, and cried with a bursting heart till late into the night.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN SORROW.

Of what followed that night of mourning I remember but snatches and brief glimpses. There is nothing more positively torturing to the mind in sorrow than the way in which the mere excitement of grief robs the intellect of all power of perspective, and gives to the smallest, meanest incidents the prominence and force of great events. It is as though the jar given to the nervous system had untuned us for the entire world, and all things come amiss. I am sure, indeed, I know it would have been impossible to have met more gentle and considerate kindness than I now experienced on every hand, and yet I lived in a sort of feverish irritability, as though expecting each moment to have my position questioned, and my right to be there disputed.

In obedience to the custom of the country, it was necessary that the funeral should take place within forty-eight hours after death, and though all the details had been carefully looked to by the Count's orders, certain questions still should be asked of me, and my leave obtained for certain acts.

The small church of Hunyadi-Naglos was fixed on for the last resting-place. It contained the graves of eight generations of Hunyadis, and to accord a place amongst them to a stranger, and a Protestant, was deemed a high honor. Affliction seemed to have developed in me all the pride of my race, for I can recall with what sullen hauteur I heard of this concession, and rather took it as a favor accorded than accepted. An overweening sense of all that my father himself would have thought due to his memory was on me, and I tortured my mind to think that no mark of honor he would have desired should be forgotten. As a soldier, he had a right to a soldier's funeral, and a "Honved" battalion, with their band, received orders to be present. For miles around the landed gentry and nobles poured in, with hosts of followers. Next to a death in battle, there was no such noble death as in the hunting-field, and the splendid prowess of my father's achievement had won him imperishable honor.

All was conducted as if for the funeral of a magnate of Hungary. The titles and rank of the deceased were proclaimed aloud as we entered the graveyard, and each whose station entitled him to be thought a friend came forward and kissed the pall as the body was borne in.

One part of the ceremony overcame me altogether. When the third round of musketry had rung out over the grave, a solemn pause of half a minute or so was to ensue, then the band was to burst out with the first bars of "God preserve the Emperor;" and while a wild cheer arose, I was to spring into the saddle of my father's horse, which had been led close after the coffin, and to join the cheer. This soldier declaration that death was but a passing terror, revolted me to the heart, and I over and over asserted I could not do this. They would not yield, however; they regarded my reasons as childish sentimentality, and half impugned my courage besides. I do not know why I gave in, nor am I sure I ever did yield; but when the heavy smoke of the last round slowly rose over the bier, I felt myself jerked up into the saddle of a horse that plunged wildly and struck out madly in affright. With a rider's instinct, I held my seat, and even managed the bounding animal with the hand of a practised rider. Four fearful bounds I sat unshaken, while the air rang with the hoarse cheer of some thousand voices, and then a sickness like death itself gathered over my heart, — a sense of horror, of where I was and why, came over me. My arms fell powerless to my sides, and I rolled from the saddle and fell senseless and stunned to the ground.

Without having received serious injury, I was too ill to be removed from the little village of Naglos, where I was confined to bed for ten days. The doctor remained with me for some days, and came again and again to visit me afterwards. The chief care of me, however, devolved on my father's valet, a smart young Swiss, whom I had difficulty in believing not to be English, so perfectly did he speak our language.

I soon saw this fellow was thoroughly conversant with all my father's history, and, whether in his confidence or not, knew everything that concerned him, and understood his temperament and nature to perfection. There was much adroitness in the way in which he showed me this, without ever shocking my pride or offending my taste by any display of a supposed influence. Of his consummate tact I need give but one, — a very slight instance, it is true, but enough to denote the man. He, in addressing me as Sir Digby, remarked how the sound of my newly acquired title seemed to recall my father to my mind at once, and ever after limited himself to saying simply "sir," which attracted no attention from me.

Another instance of his address I must record also. I had got my writing-desk on the bed, and was writing to my mother, to whom I had already despatched two telegraphic messages, but as yet received no reply. "I beg pardon, sir," said La Grange, entering in his usual noiseless fashion; "but I thought you would like to know that my Lady has left Schloss Hunyadi. She took her departure last night for Pesth."

"You mean — " I faltered, not really knowing what I would say.

"Yes, sir," said he, thoroughly aware of what was passing in my mind. "She admitted no one, not even the doctor, and started at last with only a few words of adieu in writing for the Countess."

"What impression has this left? How are they speaking of her?" asked I, blurting out against my will what was working within me.

"I believe, sir," said he, with a very faint smile, "they lay it all to English ways and habits. At least I have heard no other comments than such as would apply to these."

"Be sure that you give rise to no others," said I, sternly.

"Of course not, sir. It would be highly unbecoming in me to do so."

"And greatly to your disservice besides," added I, severely.

He bowed in acquiescence, and said no more.

"How long have you served my father, La Grange?" asked I.

"About two years, sir. I succeeded Mr. Nixon, sir, who often spoke of you."

"Ah, I remember Nixon. What became of him?"

"He set up the Hôtel Victoria at Spa, sir. You know, sir, that he married, and married very well too?"

"No, I never heard of it," said I, carelessly.

"Yes, sir; he married Delorme's daughter, la belle Pauline they used to call her at Brussels."

"What, Pauline Delorme?" said I, growing crimson with I know not what feeling.

"Yes, sir, the same; and she 's the size of old Pierre, her father, already: not but she 's handsome still,— but such a monster!"

I cannot say with what delight I heard of her disfigurement. It was a malice that warmed my heart like some good news.

"It was Sir Roger, sir, that made the match."

"How could that be? What could he care about it?"

"Well, sir, he certainly gave Nixon five hundred pounds to go and propose for her, and promise old Pierre his patronage, if he agreed to it."

"Are you sure of this?" asked I, eagerly.

"Nixon himself told me, sir. I remember he said, 'I have n't much time to lose about it, for the tutor, Mr. Eccles, is quite ready to take her, on the same terms, and Sir Roger does n't care which of us it is.'"

"Nor the lady either, apparently," said I, half angrily.

"Of course not. Pauline was too well brought up for that."

I was not going to discuss this point of ethics with Mr. La Grange, and soon fell off into a vein of reflection over early loves, and what they led to, which took me at last miles away from Pauline Delorme, and her fascinations.

I would have liked much to learn what sort of a life my father had led of late: whether he had plunged into habits of dissipation and excess; or whether any feeling of remorse had weighed with him, and that he sorrowed over the misery and the sorrow he had so recklessly shed around him; but I shrunk from questioning a servant on such matters, and merely asked as to his habitual spirits and temper.

"Sir Roger was unlike every other gentleman I ever lived with, sir," said he. "He was never in high spirits except when he was hard up for money. Put him down in a little country inn to wait for his remittances, and live on a few francs a day till they arrived, and I never saw his equal for good humor. He'd play with the children; he'd work in the garden. I've seen him harness the donkey, and go off for a load of firewood. There's nothing he would not do to oblige, and with a kind word and a smile for every one all the while; but if some morning he'd get up with a dark frown on his face, and say, 'La Grange, get in your bills here, and pay them; we must get away from this dog-hole,' I knew well the banker's letter had come, and that whatever he might want, it would not be money."

"And had my Lady — Madame, I mean — no influence over him?"

"None, sir, or next to none; he was all ceremony with her; took her in to dinner every day with great state, showed her every attention at table, left her at liberty to spend what money she liked. If she fancied an equipage, it was ordered at once. If she liked a bracelet, it was sent home. As to toilette, I believe there are queens have not as many dresses to change. We had two fourgons of her luggage alone, when we came to the Schloss, and she was always saying there was something she was longing for."

"Did not this irritate my father?"

"No, sir; he would simply say, 'Don't wish, but write for it.' And I verily believe this indifference piqued her, — she saw that no sacrifice of money cost him anything, and this thought wounded her pride."

"So that there was not much happiness between them?"

"There was none, sir! Something there was that Sir Roger would never consent to, but which she never ceased to insist on, and I often wondered how she could go on, to press a man of his dangerous temper, as she did, and at times she would do so to the very verge of a provocation. Do you know, sir," said he, after a short silence, — "if I was to be on my oath to-morrow, I'd not say that he was not seeking his death when he met it? I never saw a man so sick of life, — he was only puzzled how to lay it down without dishonor."

I motioned him to leave me as he said this, and of my father I never spoke to him more.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE END.

Two telegrams came from my mother. They were little other than repetitions. She had been ill, and was impatient to see me. In the last, she added that she would shorten the distance between us by coming to Dublin to meet me. I was to inquire for her at "Elridge's Hotel."

I was no less eager to be with her; but there were many matters of detail which still delayed me. First of all, all my father's papers and effects were at Schloss Hunyadi, and some of these were all-essential to me. On arriving at the Castle, a sealed packet addressed Sir Digby Norcott, Bart., in Madame Cleremont's hand, was given me. On opening, I found it contained a bunch of keys, without one word of any kind. It was an unspeakable relief to me to discover that she had not sent me either her condolences or her threats, and I could scarcely reassure myself that we had parted thus easily.

My father's personal luggage might have sufficed for half-a-dozen people. Not only did he carry about a quantity of clothes that no ordinary life could have required, but that he journeyed with every imaginable kind of weapon, together with saddlery and horse-gear of all fashions and shapes. Fishing-tackle and hunting-spears abounded; and lassos of Mexican make seemed to show that he had intended to have carried his experiences to the great Savannahs of the West.

From what I had seen of him, I was in no way prepared for the order and regularity in which I found his papers. All that regarded his money matters was contained in one small oak desk, in which I found a will, a copy of which, it was stated, was deposited with Norton and Temple, Solicitors, Furnival's Inn. The document ran thus: —

"I leave whatever I may die possessed of in personal or real property to the wife I have long neglected, in trust for the boy I have done much to corrupt. With time, and in the enjoyment of better fortune, they may learn to forgive me; but even if they should not, it will little trouble the rest of —— ROGER NORCOTT.

"I desire that each of my servants in my service at the time of my death should receive a quarter's wages; but no present or gratuity of any kind. It is a class that always served me with fear and dislike, and whose services I ever accepted with distrust and repugnance.

"I also desire that my retriever, 'Spy,' be shot as soon after my death as may be, and that my other dogs be given away to persons who have never known me, and that my heirs will be particular on this head, so that none shall pretend that they inherit this or that of mine in token of friendship or affectionate remembrance.

"There are a few objects of furniture in the care of Salter, the house-agent at Brussels, of which I beg my wife's acceptance; they are intrinsically of little value, but she will know how dearly we have both paid for them. This is all.

(Signed) "ROGER NORCOTT, Bart.

"Witnesses, JOSEPH GRANES, head groom.
"PAUL LANYON, house-steward."

This will, which bore for date only four months prior to his death, did not contain any, the slightest, allusion to Madame Cleremont. Was it that by some antecedent arrangement he had taken care to provide for her, omitting, through a sense of delicacy to my mother, all mention of her name? This I could not guess at the time, nor did I ever discover afterwards.

In a larger desk I found a mass of letters; they were tied in packets, each with a ribbon of a different color; they were all in women's handwriting. There were several miniatures on ivory, one of which was of my mother, when a girl of about eighteen. It was exceedingly beautiful, and wore an expression of girlish innocence and frankness positively charming. On the back, in my father's hand, there was,—"Why won't they keep this look? Is the fault theirs or ours?"

Of the contents of that box, I committed all to the flames except that picture. A third desk, the key of which was appended to his watch, contained a manuscript in his writing, headed "My Cleremont Episode, how it began, and how it cannot but end." I own it pushed my curiosity sorely to throw this into the fire without reading it; but I felt it would have been a disloyalty which, had he lived, he never would have pardoned, and so I restrained myself, and burned it.

One box, strongly strapped with bands of brass, and opening by a lock of most complicated mechanism, was filled with articles of jewelry, not only such trinkets as men affect to wear in shirt-studs and watch-pendants, but the costlier objects of women's wear; there were rings and charms, bracelets of massive make, and necklaces of great value. There was a diamond cross, too, at back of which was a locket, with a braid of very beautiful fair hair. This looked as though it had been worn, and if so, how had it come back to him again? by what story of sorrow, perhaps of death?

If a sentiment of horror and loyalty had made me burn all the letters, I had found there was no restraining the exercise of my imagination as to these relics, every one of which I invested with some story. In a secret drawer of this box, was a considerable sum in gold, and a letter of credit for a large amount on Escheles, of Vienna, by which it appeared that he had won the chief prize of the Frankfort lottery, in the spring drawing; a piece of fortune, which, by a line in his handwriting, I saw he believed was to cost him dearly: "What is to be counterpoise to this luck? An infidelity, or a sudden death? I can't say that either affright me, but I think the last would be less of an insult."

In every relic of him, the same tone of mockery prevailed, — an insolent contempt for the world, a disdain from which he did not exempt himself, went through all he said or did; and it was plain to see that, no matter how events went with him, he always sufficed for his own unhappiness.

What a relief it was to me to turn from this perpetual scorn to some two or three letters of my dear mother's, written after their separation indeed, but in a spirit of such thorough forgiveness, and with such an honest desire for his welfare, that I only wondered how any heart could have resisted such loving generosity. I really believe nothing so jarred upon him as her humility. Every reference to their inequality of condition seemed to affect him like an insult; and on the back of one of her letters there was written in pencil, "Does she imagine I ever forget from what I took her; or that the memory is a pleasant one?"

Mr. La Grange's curiosity to learn what amount of money my father had left behind him, and what were the dispositions of his will, pushed my patience very hard indeed. I could not, however, exactly afford to get rid of him, as he had long been intrusted with the payment of tradesmen's bills, and he was in a position to involve me in great difficulty, if so disposed.

At last we set out for England; and never shall I forget the strange effect produced upon me by the deference my new station attracted towards me. It seemed to me but yesterday that I was the companion of poor Hanserl, of the "yard;" and now I had become, as if by magic, one of the favored of the earth. The fame of being rich spreads rapidly, and my reputation on that head lost nothing through any reserve or forbearance of my valet. I was an object of interest, too, as the son of that daring Englishman who had lost his life so heroically. Heaven knows how La Grange had related the tragic incident, or with what embellishment he had been pleased to adorn it. I can only say that half my days were passed in assuring eager inquirers that I was neither present at the adventure, nor wounded in the affray; and all my efforts were directed to proving that I was a most insignificant person, and without the smallest claim to interest on my side.

Arrived in London, I was once more a "personage;" at least, to my family solicitors. My father's will had been already proved, and I was recognized in all form as the heir to his title and fortune. They were eager to know would I restore the family seat at Hexham. The Abbey was an architectural gem that all England was proud of, and I was eagerly entreated not to suffer it to drop into decay and ruin. The representation of the borough — long neglected by my family — only needed an effort to secure; and would I not like the ambition of a parliamentary life?

What glimpses of future greatness were shown me! what possible chances of this or that attained that would link me with real rank forever! And all this time I was pining to clasp my mother to my arms; to pour out my whole heart before her, and tell her that I loved a pale Jewish girl, silent and half sad-looking, but whose low soft voice still echoed within my heart, and whose cold hand had left a thrill after its touch that had never ceased to move me.

"Oh, Digby, my own, own darling," cried she, as she hugged me in her arms, "what a great tall fellow you have grown, and how like — how like him!" and she burst into a torrent of tears, renewed every time that she raised her eyes to my face, and saw how I resembled my father. There seemed an ecstasy in this grief of which she never wearied, and day after day she would sit holding my hand, gazing wistfully at me, and only turning away as her tearful eyes grew dim with weeping. I will not dwell on the days we passed together; full of sorrow they were, but a sorrow so hallowed by affection that we felt an unspeakable calm shed over us.

My great likeness to my father, as she first saw him, made her mind revert to that period, and she never ceased to talk of that time of hope and happiness. Ever ready to ascribe anything unfavorable in his character to the evil influences of others, she maintained that though occasionally carried away by hot temper and passion, he was not only the soul of honor but had a heart of tenderness and gentleness. Curious to find out what sudden change of mind had led him after years of neglect and forgetfulness to renew his relations with her, by remitting money to her banker, we examined all that we could of his letters and papers to discover a clew to this mystery. Baffled in all our endeavors, we were driven at length to write to the Frankfort banker through whom the letter of credit had come. As we assumed to say that the money should be repaid by us, in this way hoping to trace the history of the incident, we received for answer, that, though bound strictly to secrecy at the time, events had since occurred which in a measure removed that obligation. The advance, he declared, came from the house of Hodnig and Oppovich, Fiume, who having failed since that time, there was no longer the same necessity for reserve. "It is only this morning," he added, "that we have received news of the death of Herr Ignaz Oppovich, the last of this once opulent firm, now reduced to utter ruin."

My mother and I gazed on each other in silence as we read these words, when at length she threw her arms around me and said, "Let us go to her, Digby; let us set out this very day."

Two days after we were on the Rhine. I was seated with my mother on the deck of a river steamer, when I was startled to hear a voice utter my name. The speaker was a burly stout man of middle age, who walked the deck with a companion to whom he talked in a loud tone.

"I tell you, sir," said he, "that boy of Norcott's, what between those new coal-fields and the Hexham property, can't have less than ten thousand a year."

"And he's going to marry a rich Austrian Jewess, they say," replied the other, "as if his own fortune was not enough for him."

"He'll marry her, and desert her just as his father did."

I have but to say that I accomplished one part of this prediction, and hope never to fulfil the other.

THE END.

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